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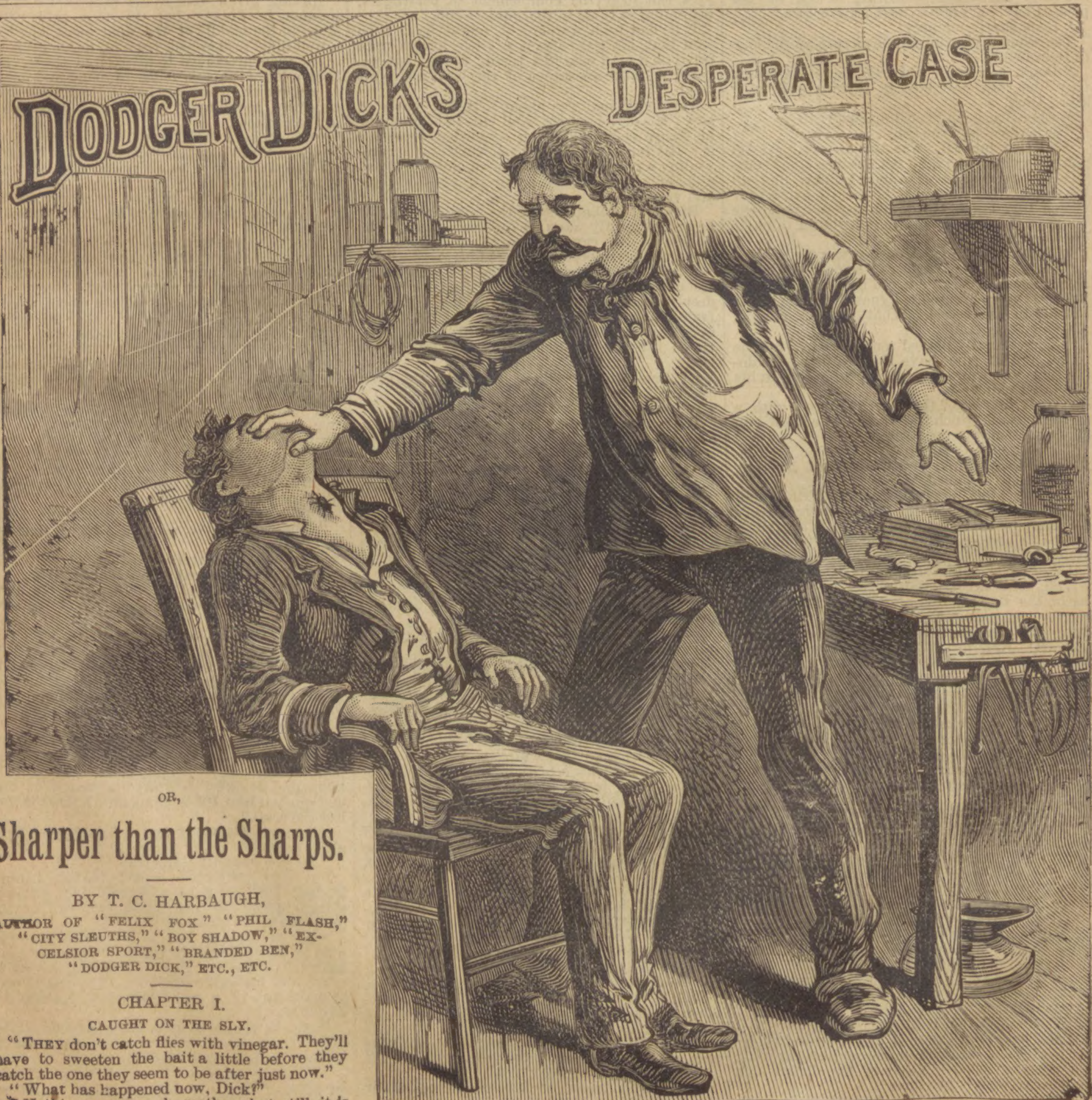
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OR,

Sharper than the Sharps.

BY T. C. HARBAUGH,

AUTHOR OF "FELIX FOX" "PHIL FLASH,"
"CITY SLEUTHS," "BOY SHADOW," "EX-
CELSIOR SPORT," "BRANDED BEN,"
"DODGER DICK," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

CAUGHT ON THE SLY.

"They don't catch flies with vinegar. They'll have to sweeten the bait a little before they catch the one they seem to be after just now."

"What has happened now, Dick?"

"Nothing very much, mother; but still, it is significant enough to think about. I was lounging on the Battery a while ago, with one eye

ANOTHER MOMENT THE LOATHSOME INSECT WAS ACTUALLY CRAWLING DOWN
DODGER DICK'S BARED NECK!

open as usual, when two fellows whom I knew on sight for the shrewdest rascals in New York came along. They were in elegant disguise, and so certain were they that I could not penetrate it that one of them approached me and asked for a match. I was rather slow in getting it, for I wanted to take the fellow as he stood."

"And did you do it, my boy?" cried the woman, and her eyes snapped with delight as she leaned toward her companion in the little room, our old acquaintance, Dodger Dick, the young sleuth of Gotham. "Tell me, did you actually photograph the rogue in his borrowed plumage?"

"I did nothing else, Mammy Sturgeon," laughed Dick, leaning back in his chair. "I tell you there is no discount on science when she lets me carry a camera in the top of a blacking kit. I think I got an almost perfect picture of the gentleman who struck me for a match while his comrade stood aloof and appeared impatient."

"What is he like, Dick?"

In response to the eager interrogative, the boy spy took from between the leaves of a memorandum a small photograph not yet pasted on cardboard. He handed it across the table to Mother Sturgeon who bent over it with intense curiosity.

"He was in fine feathers, sure enough!" she suddenly exclaimed, throwing a look at the pleased boy. "I don't think I know him."

"Look sharp, mammy!"

The woman scrutinized the picture more closely than before.

"Don't you know Guy Gardette—'Gotham Guy' as they call him in certain quarters?" asked Dick.

Mother Sturgeon looked up surprised.

"Is it possible?" she cried.

"It's Guy himself," was the answer. "I did not get a chance to take his pal who stood some yards away, but never mind; I know him all the same. Guy ran into the trap I had set for people like him. He didn't see the bull's-eye while I was getting his match; but I think he knew me."

"That is what he approached you for."

"Perhaps. He whispered something to his comrade when they met, and both men laughed like they were pleased. I guess I got the better of Guy in the tussle. What is your opinion, Mammy Sturgeon?"

"You certainly played a neat trick," was the reply. "But, what have the two men been doing that you wanted to photograph Guy in his borrowed plumes?"

"Wait and see," the boy answered, with a mysterious air which the woman who knew him did not attempt to penetrate.

"Who was with the Gotham fox?"

"Broadway Bink, or Mr. Montfort Binkley, as he likes to be called."

"I know him!" exclaimed Dick's friend and guardian, though she no longer exercised any authority in that direction. "He is the fellow who came here once on hunt of you though he pretended to be doing the very opposite thing."

"It is the same street fox," cried Dick. "Well, those are the daisies that were blossoming on the Battery this afternoon. I was waiting for something to turn up and something did. Isn't that photograph a triumph in amateur art? And just think of it. You carry the whole kit in a blacking box! That's getting it down pretty fine, I'm thinking."

"Fine enough to steal a march on fellows like Gotham Guy and Broadway Bink."

Dodger Dick picked up the picture and after studying it a few moments put it back in his pocket with a smile of satisfaction.

"Mammy Sturgeon, I'm on a new case," said he. "It is a very queer one, too—queer and dangerous."

The woman started painfully at the last word. "I wish you had not used that word, Dick," she responded.

"Well, I wanted to give you the whole layout," he laughed. "Yes, the present case is dangerous, but I've run some hot gantlets and am here to boast of every one."

"That is true, but, Dick, you know the old saying about the pitcher going so often to the well? It gets broken at last."

"But I'm not going the last time! If I come out of this case successful, and that's just what I intend doing, I think I will get out of the profession and lead a retired life."

"You've said that before."

"So I have, but I guess I didn't mean to keep my word then, for I've been through some pretty tough cases since. Maybe I had better not make any resolve this time."

"If you don't expect to keep it, don't make it," and Mother Sturgeon spoke rather sternly.

"If you are in dangerous business now, you want to keep your eyes open."

"Just as if I sleep on the trail!" was the response. "I don't do that, you know."

Mother Sturgeon's response was a confirmatory smile, and Dick picked up his hat and left the chair.

"I'm going out!" he went on. "There is a person who must be seen, and that about this time."

"Look out for number one," admonished the woman. "I can't spare you, Dick. You've been good to me," and the voice trembled a little, as Dick the Dodger sprung from the room and was soon going down the stairs to the street.

"She can't spare me any more than I could get along without her!" he cried. "There may be more polished women in New York than Mother Sturgeon, but there are none with a bigger heart. I just love her, I do!"

When the Dodger reached the street, he started off at a rapid gait, and soon disappeared from the vicinity of his quarters.

A short distance away he bounded up the steps of one of the Elevated depots, and was soon being whisked up-town.

It happened that the car which the boy sleuth took was by no means full, and Dick's ferret eyes ran over the complement of passengers, beginning at those in the opposite end.

If he had been watched, it might have been seen that his gaze dwelt a little longer than usual on a man who was trying to read a newspaper with the assistance of the light above his head.

This individual was about fifty-five years of age. His clothes were well cut, but did not fit his figure very well, being somewhat loose for it. His face was devoid of whiskers, thus revealing a pair of thin lips drawn close together, and above them shone a pair of eyes deep-set and very dark.

Dick had probably seen the man before, for he smiled faintly when he discovered him in the middle of the car and on the opposite side. Dick had not expected to meet him there.

"Better luck than I looked for," mentally ejaculated the Dodger. "Mr. Noggles is too deeply engrossed just now to be disturbed. Isn't he busy? I'll bet my head and all there's in it, that he doesn't see a word before him. He is listening to the two passengers on his left."

"Fourteenth street!" at that moment sung out the train guard, and the cars came to a standstill along the platform.

The man watched by Dick dropped the paper, folded it quickly and hurried to the door as he thrust it into his coat pocket.

"I guess I'm able to keep up, Mr. Noggles," chuckled the Dodger, gliding after his prey. "You've saved me a trip further up-town by being accommodatingly found on the L."

Several passengers alighted at the station and a number took the cars. A little confusion was caused by a very large woman with a large basket blocking the way for a moment, but it did not prevent Dick from keeping in sight his man who hastened to the steps leading down to the street.

In a short time the Dodger and his quarry were on the sidewalk.

Noggles threw a quick look over his shoulder and started briskly off.

"You can't make me lose you if you get yourself shot out of a cannon!" exclaimed Dick, watching the man. "You don't seem to be trying to get away from me, Mr. Noggles. You want to get home; that's all."

The man led Dick a brisk little chase to Eighth avenue where, just as he was in the act of opening a door with a night key, the young detective came up and accosted him.

"I promised to see you to-night, Mr. Noggles," Dick said after his polite salutation. "I was coming up on the 'L' when I ran across you, and—"

"You did, eh?" interrupted the man with a frown, and he looked at the boy in a half-insolent manner. "You watched me in the car and then followed me to my house?"

"I didn't like to stop you on the street."

"No! You are very considerate," and Dick got another of those looks he did not like. "Well, I may as well tell you here as elsewhere that I don't want your services any longer."

Dodger Dick retreated a step and stared at the man who had unlocked the door and pushed it ajar, his hand still on the knob.

"Don't you intend to investigate the affair any further?" asked the boy.

"No! If I did, I'd go to the proper place and

employ men detectives. I don't like to be dogged on the street at night. Besides, there's nothing in the case anyhow. Do I owe you anything, boy?"

"No, Mr. Noggles; but—"

"Well, then, good-night!" and to Dick's consternation the man stepped into the house and coolly shut the door in his face.

Dick was at first inclined to get mad over this provoking piece of business, but as he looked at the locked portal and turned away, a laugh broke across his lips.

"Go ahead, Mr. Noggles!" he exclaimed. "Maybe you can afford to do this and maybe you can't. If you think you've shaken Dodger Dick off, before long you may be the worst fooled citizen of Gotham. You don't intend to investigate any further, eh? Well, I do!" and a look of resolution lit up the boy detective's eyes as he quickened his gait and speedily left the house far behind.

CHAPTER II.

A PAIR OF THEM.

"I GUESS he knows now that we are two!" and the man called Noggles lit the gas in a room on the second floor of the house he had entered, and laughed out over his summary dismissal of Dodger Dick.

Having given vent to his satisfaction in this manner, he drew a chair up to a table which stood in the middle of the apartment, and took a well-filled pocketbook from an inside pocket.

He then proceeded to take from the pocketbook a lot of papers, notes of hand and memoranda, which, when he had looked them over carefully, he hid away in a secret compartment in the bedstead.

"Of course I don't want the services of the boy ferret any longer," decided Mr. Noggles. "I'll turn him over to my friend who is itching to set a trap for the young sharp. We are entirely too old to be tripped by a boy, and we have too much at stake to let him make any progress."

Noggles was interrupted here by the sound of steps on the stairs outside the room, and after a brief interval three light raps that sounded very like a signal were heard at the door.

The man quickly crossed the room, slipped back a bolt and admitted a rather tall fellow with a jetty mustache waxed at the ends.

The visitor was scrupulously attired, and had the air of those free-and-easy gentlemen who frequent the city parks of warm days—spiders, always on the lookout for flies.

A smile that passed promptly between the two men told of mutual recognition, and the younger one—he must have been twenty years Noggles's junior—threw himself into a chair and crossed his legs with an air of ease.

"By Jove! I wish you had dropped around a little earlier," said Noggles.

"Why so?"

"You would have seen me thro' a thunderbolt at the boy."

The young man started visibly.

"Eh? Did you really do that?" cried he.

"Well, I did. And he took it as the average man would take a thunderbolt of the sort, too."

"Kind o' staggered him, did it?"

"Took every breath of wind out of his sails."

"I wish I had been here, Nero. There might have been another scene. I did not think you would get to administer the grand bounce so soon. I saw the dock rat this afternoon."

"Where?"

"On the Battery. He was playing boothblack, but when Bink and I discovered him, he was temporarily out of employment. He did not know me, though I borrowed a match of him and quizzed him for a moment. I think he has lost the trail."

"Pshaw! He never had it!" exclaimed Noggles.

"Do you actually think so?"

"I have convinced myself to this extent. Dodger Dick may be a shrewd boy in some things, but he has not found the trail of the great Marigold fortune."

"I wish he had, but at the same time I'm glad he hasn't," was the reply. "Still, we can't afford to have the boy offended, since we've given him his walking-papers. The easiest way to make sure of a still tongue is to get him out of our way."

Noggles's visitor twirled his mustache as he finished, and the old fellow saw a certain sparkle in the eyes that confronted him.

"I'll have to leave that job to you," said Noggles. "You are younger than I and besides, the city is well-known ground to you."

"Well known?" echoed Gotham Guy, leaning

back in his chair and thrusting his thumbs into the arm-holes of his vest. "I would like to see the man who knows it better than I do."

"He doesn't live!" exclaimed Noggles. "And that's why I am perfectly willing to leave the scheme to you. We have used Dodger Dick as far as we could. He has discovered nothing for us, but he may know something that might damage us in the future."

"That's it exactly!" was the quick response. "During the next forty-eight hours I'll drop thunderbolt number two in front of the wharf fox, and so effectually, Nero, that we never need think of him during the remainder of the game."

Noggles was so pleased with this assurance that he rubbed his hands with glee, while his face became wreathed in satisfied smiles.

"What progress have you made?" suddenly resumed Guy, cutting in on Noggles's glee.

"None. Hold! I know, or think I do, that the Miss Lucy Marigold, whose name appeared in the Directory three years ago, is the person we want to unearth."

"What makes you think so?"

"Oh, various things," answered Noggles, evasively. "She has not appeared on the city list since. The truth is that she disappeared between the time she was listed and the publication of the book. The lady, Mrs. Palgrave, with whom she boarded at the time, says that Lucy went off one night while she was very despondent over her discharge from employment."

"What! have you unearthed Mrs. Palgrave?" cried the young man.

"I have succeeded in doing that."

"Yet, you sit there and tell me that you have discovered nothing. Come, come, Noggles: this won't do."

"Pardon me," replied Noggles, coloring and moving uneasily in his chair. "Perhaps I do not attach to my discovery the importance you seem to. Mrs. Palgrave really knows nothing about the girl, although she was her boarder for six months."

"Then she is no kin to the general run of boarding-house mistresses," laughed the young fellow. "I should like to see this model lady."

"I found her just in time. She left the city the day after I discovered her. She is in the West now—somewhere in Illinois, I think."

Guy Gardette was silent for a moment, during which time he seemed to study Noggles's face intently if not suspiciously.

"That being the case, I presume I will not get to interview this woman," he went on. "If, as you think, Miss Marigold is, or was, the person we want, we are about three years behind time. But I haven't said that I believe it. This is a tremendous city, Noggles. It has ten thousand hiding-places, but haven't I intimated that I know them all?"

The young man got up and walked across the room to a mirror where he nervously gave his mustache a few twists, and then wheeled suddenly upon Noggles, who was regarding him with no little curiosity.

"See here! We've got to find out something mighty soon!" he exclaimed, and then he leaned toward Noggles, whose face involuntarily retreated from his burning eyes.

"You want to go straight back to Miss Marigold's trail while I take care of the river rat, Dodger Dick. There is to be no half way business here. If I do wear pretty fine clothes, I'm getting to the bottom of the coffers and Mr. Montfort Binkley isn't far from the same place. Go back to the trail, Nero. A man who is able to discover Mrs. Palgrave in a city like this, ought to score a bigger victory than that. Let me divide the work for the next forty-eight hours. You go back to the trail of the girl, Miss Lucy Marigold. I'll snare the fox."

"Agreed!" cried Noggles with snapping eyes. "I'll do the best I can."

"You know I will without a promise," laughed Gotham Guy. "How do you know that Dodger Dick has not discovered a clew? Didn't you dismiss him from the case before he had a chance to report?"

"I don't think he had any report to make," responded Noggles. "He tried to stammer a remonstrance of some kind when I cut him off, and entered the house."

"Well, let that go," said Guy. "Now go right back to your trail. Of course if Mrs. Palgrave has taken Greeley's advice and gone West, we should lose time looking after her. You might look over the reports of suicides for the month in which Lucy disappeared, though I don't think you'd find any clew. Maybe the man who discharged her heard of her afterward. But these are mere suggestions, Noggles."

Use your own judgment and pursue the course that most commends itself. Only keep this fact in view. We find Miss Marigold and make a million; we lose the game, and—Ha, ha! old fellow, I see you know what the result would be. Your cheeks give you away; but never mind. We are not going to fail. By Jericho! we can't afford to."

"Fail? I don't know the word!" and Noggles brought his clinched hand down upon the table with tremendous force. "If you succeed on your mission as well as I intend to on mine, we'll change our names to Goldbug and brother before the summer's out."

There was a mutual laugh over this sally from Noggles, and Gotham Guy placed his hat jauntily on one side of his head and whistled a bar of a popular air.

"Well, what news?" asked a man whom Guy joined in a square a short distance from Noggles's quarters ten minutes later.

"He's done two things—quite important ones, too. He has discovered the girl's lost landlady, and dismissed Dodger Dick."

The person who heard this report looked sharply at the speaker.

"Turned the river rat off, did he?" he exclaimed. "I'm afraid it was a little soon."

"No, it wasn't soon enough," growled Gotham Guy. "I think, though, that he did it in a manner that will give the boy sleuth some suspicions. It was Noggles's fault that we ever dealt with the young chap, anyhow. But never mind, Bink; I've taken him in hand."

"Who?—the boy?"

"Yes. He'll be playing bootblack again tomorrow."

"That is a supposition. What if he doesn't play it then?" smiled Guy's friend.

"Oh, then I'll look for him elsewhere," was the quick response. "I've agreed to find and silence the Dodger within forty-eight hours, and I will!"

CHAPTER III.

NOGGLES ON THE SCENT.

THE next day at a certain hour in the forenoon, Mr. Nero Noggles appeared on one of the quiet streets of New York.

He was attired in a suit that became him better than the one he had worn in the Elevated cars the night before, and a pair of gold-rimmed glasses bestrode his nose.

These additions to his toilet worked a striking change in his appearance, and it would have taken eyes as keen as Dodger Dick's to have penetrated his disguise.

Noggles walked some distance up the street closely scrutinizing the numbers of the buildings as if looking for a particular one.

The street he was on was some distance from his quarters, where we saw him last, and he had reached it with the help of the horse-cars.

At last Noggles stopped, as if satisfied that he had found the place sought, and the following moment he mounted some steps and jerked a plain knocker.

He was permitted to stand several seconds on the landing before his summons received a reply, and then the door was opened by a woman, who planted herself firmly in the way, as if to bar Noggles out.

"Is Mrs. Palgrave in?" asked the man.

Before a reply could be given, a voice that seemed to come from somewhere overhead was heard:

"Let the gentleman in, Susan; I'll be down in the parlor in a moment."

A smile parted Noggles's lips as the barrier stepped aside, and he walked into an adjoining parlor and took a chair.

Five minutes passed, and then he was joined by a woman who had passed the prime of life, but whose features bore traces of former beauty.

She was rather corpulent, and taller than Noggles, and as she crossed the room to him, she greeted him with a profuseness that seemed to please him.

"What news have you now?" he queried, eagerly. "You promised, you know, to look after your pretty boarder."

"After Lucy Marigold? So I did, Mr. Noggles," and the woman's face brightened perceptibly. "I am glad to say that I think I have found out something."

"Have you, indeed?" cried Noggles, unable to conceal his delight. "You cannot value the service you have done me, Mrs. Belden. You place me under everlasting obligations—"

"Never mind that," interrupted the woman.

"I am always ready to favor one whose friendship I value highly. I told you that my boarder left me three years ago this June?"

"Yes, yes."

"Well, she neither committed suicide nor left the city."

"Sensible girl," ejaculated Noggles.

"She simply changed her landlady—that was all," continued the woman with a peculiar smile. "I presume my table did not suit her epicurean tastes, or something of the sort. Epicurean is the proper word, I believe."

"The very word, Mrs. Belden."

"Well, she went to a boarding-house on the East side, where she remained several months, while she got employment in another book-binding. I found this out after a manner of my own, and then I was acquainted with the girl's new landlady, Mrs. Parker. Lucy left her almost as abruptly as she took her departure from my house, but Mrs. Parker, it seems, did not lose sight of her altogether."

"Good for Mrs. Parker!" exclaimed Noggles.

"She tells me that she heard occasionally of Lucy, who fitted from bindery to bindery, until I presume she has worked in every one in the city."

"Then she is here yet?"

"Yes, Mr. Noggles, I have reasons for believing that Miss Lucy Marigold is still a resident of New York."

Noggles almost felt his eyes snap with delight. He was sure that he experienced a thrill he had not known for many a day.

"I think she is out of employment just now," Mrs. Belden, alias Mrs. Palgrave, for she had two names, as we shall hereafter explain, proceeded. "She has of late been living under an assumed name, for what reason I do not know, and I am told that she keeps pretty close. It is the same Lucy Marigold who used to be my boarder, though she might hesitate to admit as much to you. You will find her at Number 999 O—street, where she has a quiet back room on the second floor."

Noggles bowed his thanks, and complimented Mrs. Palgrave on her tact and shrewdness.

He did not tell her that she had succeeded where three men and a boy had failed, but he said enough to let her know that she had done him a very great service.

To make sure of the girl's address, Noggles took it down on a slip of paper, and cautioning the woman to be careful who interviewed her, left the house in the best of spirits.

"A woman for shrewdness after all!" he cried. "Without this female sleuth, I should have failed—totally failed. I will let Gotham Guy think that Mrs. Palgrave is out West, while, as Mrs. Belden, she serves me loyally. So I have found the missing girl, have I? It is the best piece of work of my life. Three years missing, but found at last! The boy ferret couldn't do it, and the trail baffled Guy and Broadway Bink; but here I have picked up the missing link with the assistance of a woman thought to be not over shrewd. What a stroke it is!"

So a matter of course, Nero Noggles's next move was on O—street.

If lost Lucy Marigold was there he wanted to know it; not only this, but he burned to see the girl—to confirm with his own eyes the truth of Mrs. Palgrave's story.

As he tripped merrily along some distance gloating over his capital luck, and became oblivious to his surroundings.

He was not too engrossed, however, to miss his bearings, and a short time after quitting Mrs. Palgrave's house, Noggles beheld the eagerly sought for 999 O—street.

"Let me see," he mused. "By Jove! who shall I ask for if she goes under another name here? Mrs. Palgrave did not give me her present name, if she knew it. Oh! I will pretend to be the proprietor of a small bindery in search of a stitcher. Lucy has no employment now, and I think the scheme will catch her if she is to be caught at all."

Noggles boldly mounted the steps in front of the two-story brown brick house, and had his ring answered almost immediately by a woman who, from her looks, he decided to be the landlady herself.

The man had an oily tongue, as well as an air calculated to deceive one not very suspicious.

He cleverly carried out the scheme he had just hit upon, and stated that he had learned by accident that one of the inmates of the house was a young bookbinder just then out of employment.

The woman who listened waited patiently till Noggles got through.

"I had such a boarder," she replied. "She

was with me as late as yesterday, but she is not here now."

Noggles seemed to feel the floor giving way under his feet.

"Gone?" he cried. "Do you tell me that I have come too late—to secure a hand?" he added, toning down.

"You are too late," answered the woman. "My boarder came to me last night about six and said she had found employment and a new boarding-house, but that she would not leave for a few days. At nine o'clock, however, she surprised me by giving up her room, and going off in a carriage with her effects, which were not numerous, of course." And the boarding-house keeper finished with a smile that did not put Noggles at his ease.

He sat silent in the woman's presence a few seconds.

"She went off in a carriage, did she?" he suddenly exclaimed.

"That was the way she went."

"Had she sent for it?"

"I can't say."

"Did anybody come with the vehicle?"

"I think not. The driver helped her off with her goods, and she paid me to the very cent before she went away."

"Which way did she go?"

"Toward the avenue, though I didn't watch her long."

Noggles reflected for a moment.

"Let me see, what was the young lady's name?" he asked.

"She called herself Maggie Reynolds."

"Oh, yes, that is right. She seemed to be perfectly honest about going away to new work and a new home, did she?"

"Perfectly honest," echoed Mrs. Blank, who seemed to wonder why all these pointed questions. "Maggie was very quiet, and I did not like to lose her. You came a little too late to secure her services, and, as I've already said, I am very sorry."

Noggles was more than sorry.

He could have bitten his lip through with chagrin, and while one thought chased another through his brain, he secretly cursed himself for not having been "a little faster" as he expressed it.

Further inquiry rewarded him with an accurate description of the fair bookbinder. It was almost as good as a photograph, and Noggles thought he would be able to recognize the girl on sight.

But it was the sudden flight that puzzled him. If at six o'clock Lucy did not intend to leave the place for some days, what had occurred to make her change her mind at nine?

She had not been out of the house in the interval to send for the carriage, but it had come all the same and taken her off.

Noggles seemed to feel the recently discovered link slipping from his hand while he walked from the house with Lucy Marigold still in the uncertain distance.

"I know that she still lives and that is something!" he cried. "She is bound to fall into my hands in the end. I have never lost a game yet. She can't beat all three of us! It is impossible!"

"Well, Mr. Noggles, how did you make out?" grinned a well-built youth whose eyes sparkled as they watched the schemer down the street. "I fancy you don't feel in the best of humor. You look like you've lost your best friend, but cheer up, cheer up, old fellow!" and the boy laughed as Noggles turned a corner and disappeared.

CHAPTER IV.

OVERHEARD.

GUY GARDETTE, or "Gotham Guy" as he was known among his associates, was not unknown to the Secret Service operators of New York.

While the fellow had never committed an overt act which had placed him even for the shortest time behind bars, he was for all that a "suspect" who was considered important enough to bear watching.

His comrade, Broadway Bink, might be placed in the same category, and the two made one of the shrewdest pairs known to the police.

It is not for us to state how these two worthies came to form an alliance with Mr. Nero Noggles; we have seen that a partnership existed between them, and our previous chapters have made clear, we trust that their object was the obtaining of a fortune that would make all three immensely rich.

Noggles's visit to Mrs. Palgrave and afterward to the boarding-house where the girl, supposed to be Lucy Marigold, had lived last was in

furtherance of the plot, for without her, as is evident, the game would not succeed.

The disappointed man went from the boarding-house straight to his home on Eighth avenue. He was not watched for by the boy who read the result of his visit on his face, and who was no less a person than Dodger Dick, and when he reached his lodgings he began to devise a new plan for finding the girl who had slipped through his fingers so to speak, at the last moment.

At the same time Gotham Guy was intent on his new mission.

The day was warm and hundreds of people had been driven to the shaded parks for shelter from the scorching sun. This is especially true of the Battery where the suffering crowds could obtain occasional whiffs of sea-breeze, and in the afternoon hundreds thronged the Park longing for the mantle of night and the change it would bring.

Guy Gardette was a visitor to the Battery.

He had discarded his somewhat dudish costume for one less apt to be recognized by Dodger Dick, and the waxed ends of his mustache had been combed out, and drooped silkily over his mouth.

Indeed, thus attired the New York sharp could almost defy recognition by his most intimate friends and while he strolled among the trees and along the wharf, he used his keen eyes to the best advantage.

Guy expected to discover the boy detective in the same disguise he had worn the day before; but, although he saw many a lazy gamin armed with a bootblack's kit, he did not notice the one he was in search of.

The forty-eight hours in which he had agreed to entrap the Dodger were flitting away, and he seemed no nearer success in the Park than when he made the boast.

At last Guy grew tired of looking among the panting crowds for Dick, and in order to rest a spell before he sought another trail, he took possession of an empty bench and lit a cigar.

He could barely hope that fortune would favor him by bringing the boy in sight, but he had not half-finished his "Habana" before he started and fixed his eyes on a youth who was walking toward the water a few steps away.

Guy, in the excitement of the moment, threw his cigar away, and it at once became a prize of battle for two urchins who pounced upon it like young eagles.

The sport himself hastened after the boy he had seen, and presently spied him again talking to a plainly-dressed woman of past fifty who was eating a lunch on a Park settee.

The sight was so unexpected to Guy that he did not approach near for some time, but contented himself with watching the couple from a respectful distance.

"The woman looks like Mother Sturgeon, the boy's friend," murmured Gotham Guy. "I recognize her from Bink's description of the woman he found at home the day he invaded Dick's quarters. The young rat is giving her something important from the way he talks. I wonder if there would be a chance for a fellow like me to catch a word?"

A minute afterward the city sport moved toward the occupants of the bench, and by degrees gained a tree which stood but a few feet away—near enough for a person with good ears to hear ordinary conversation.

Guy trusted much to his disguise, and when he had reached the tree he began to listen with all his might.

"I'm glad to hear that you took her to a safe place, Dick," he heard the woman say. "Was she willing to go?"

"Quite willing when I explained the situation. You see, I was in his employ long enough to make a few discoveries which told me that he is playing a pretty shrewd game for a big amount. Oh, he's a keen one, mamma—one of the slickest sharps of the city."

These words thrilled Gotham Guy and riveted his attention.

He was now convinced that the couple on the seat were Dodger Dick and Mother Sturgeon, and he felt that he had only to wait a little longer to obtain some very important information.

"They'll be watching for you to-day, maybe," suddenly resumed the woman.

"Oh, I look for something of that kind. Noggles has been tracking the girl down all summer, and when he dismissed me last night, I knew at once that something had to be done."

"And 'something' will be done," concluded Gotham Guy. "This is the richest find I've had for many a day, and if I don't profit by it, may I look out upon the world from behind the bars of a cell."

"I'm going now," remarked the boy spy. "The Park is better for you than the bouse. Mamma Sturgeon. I've got my fingers on the little game the three sharks are playing, and, though it's a little dangerous, as I told you last night, I think I'm equal to the emergency."

"Keep both eyes open," was the reply. "These fellows won't give you any rest if they suspect you."

Dodger Dick laughed a hearty, fearless laugh, and the next moment turned and bounded away without having once seen the man who had heard so much that was important from his station at the tree.

"The old lady is nothing to me now," thought Guy, starting off after Dick. "I want to keep the young ferret in sight, for, if I am not mistaken, he will lead me to a valuable prize before I spring my trap on him."

Mother Sturgeon, however, saw the city sharp as he left his post, but it never entered her mind that he had been playing spy. She dismissed him from her thoughts almost before he was out of sight and returned quickly to her lunch.

Guy had no difficulty in keeping the Dodger in sight, for the boy moved leisurely through the Park and turned into Broadway with the spy at his heels.

"I'd like to see him give me the slip," chuckled Guy, as he followed Dick with the pertinacity of the greyhound. "I'm on his track, to stay there till I've accomplished my purpose. Will he kindly lead me to the young girl he was telling Mother Sturgeon about? I am in hopes he will."

The afternoon was well advanced when the trail started from the Park, and when Gotham Guy ran Dick down, the lengthy shadows of evening were beginning to prevail once more.

The young spy of New York led his watcher to a small and modest-looking house a long distance from the Battery, and the city sharp saw the door opened by some one inside, and immediately closed on the boy.

The rascal at that moment would have given a good deal to have been able to look beyond the threshold; but the closed door barred him out, and he was forced much against his inclination to keep his distance.

He drew close to the house and held his ground.

An hour passed—it seemed a day to Guy—and the shadows of another night lay along the street.

What had become of the Dodger? Had he given the sharp the slip by quitting the house through the rear? Guy frothed when he thought of such an event.

At length, however, the door so zealously watched was opened to let a boy out, and Gotham Guy could hardly suppress a cry when he recognized the Dodger.

Dick seemed totally unaware of the sharp's presence, and when he started off, after a brief survey of his surroundings, he had the fox of the metropolis again at his heels.

"Now for the trap!" inwardly ejaculated Gotham Guy. "I know who is in the house just as well as though I had seen her. I beat Noggles as a detective, and when I have snared the river rat ahead of me, I'll astonish somebody whose dreams, no doubt, are very pleasant ones now."

Dodger Dick turned from one street into another, but could not lose the man who had him under espionage.

If he had known of the chase, he might have adopted tactics that would have surprised even Gotham Guy; but the fact that the boy resorted to no cunning seemed to confirm the sharp's belief that he knew nothing of the pursuit.

"Fate is playing right into my hands!" suddenly cried Guy Gardette. "The boy is going straight to the best trap in Gotham. If he turns into J— street, I have him!"

Sure enough, as if fortune was favoring the rascal of the city, Dodger Dick turned abruptly to the left and entered upon a street he had not traveled before.

Gotham Guy seemed to bound forward.

The next moment barely ten feet separated the pair, and when Dodger Dick heard for the first time quick and eager steps behind him, and turned to see what they meant, he was seized by the man who fell upon him like a leopard.

The street at that point was without a lamp, but, for all, Dick could see the brilliant, flashing eyes of the fellow who held him.

"Not a word!" parted Guy's lips. "A still tongue prolongs life sometimes," and, as the boy ferret was dragged toward the houses, a front door opened to receive him.

CHAPTER V.

ROOK AND HIS BEETLES.

To be caught in this manner and by the very man into whose clutches he did not want to fall, was a piece of business Dodger Dick did not relish.

Before he could recover, he was pulled into the house, and the door shut with a bang that boded evil for the young detective.

"The trap was set for me and I am in it," thought the victim. "I wonder if Gotham Guy followed me to the little house, or whether he accidentally came across me since quitting it? Well, whatever the truth be, he won't get much satisfaction out of me."

By this time Dick had been taken into a room almost dark, but which was not suffered to remain so.

All at once the gas was turned on and he was pushed into a chair when the grip that had fastened on him on the sidewalk was released.

"Even foxes are caught sometimes," laughed the New York sharp who stepped back from the chair and looked at the boy.

"It is your victory, Mr. Gardette," was the answer.

Guy started slightly, as if he had not expected so sudden a recognition.

"What is that you call me?" he asked, leaning toward Dick who was looking him squarely in the face. "You are liable to be mistaken, boy."

"Not to-night. You are not very clever at disguises, Gotham Guy. One day you air yourself in dude clothes, the next you comb out your mustache and don quite another rig. But what in the world have you caught me for?"

Guy had to look the second time before he could believe that his young prisoner was playing a subtle hand.

"Oh, I think you're safer here than out in the town," he replied carelessly.

"You are very kind," and a sarcastic twinkle appeared in Dick's eyes. "I say, Guy, won't you let me take the risks out there and open the door for me?"

Dick nodded toward the street as he spoke, and Gotham Guy shook his head.

Of course he was not going to be foolish enough to let the rat out of the trap.

Before the conversation could be continued, the New York sport stepped half-way across the room and spoke a name which brought forward a person who from the first riveted the Dodger's attention.

This individual was a man almost as dark as an Indian, and as tall and sinewy as the best specimens of the red race. He was bare-headed and wore his hair long and straight. It was as black as his penetrating eyes from which Dick glanced at his hands and found them veritable talons—just the kind he did not want to feel.

"This is the bird, Rook," Guy continued, pointing at Dick. "Take a good look at him if you want to. He came into the net of his own accord. I never saw anything like it."

"Hat a net is it?" and the next second Dodger Dick was on his feet, his eyes aglow with indignation and turned full on the two men—Gotham Guy and Rook.

"Yes, a net and a capital one at that!" cried the sharp. "Go back to the chair."

"I won't!"

Guy's face flushed with anger.

"Seat him, Rook," and almost before the words were out of his mouth, Dick felt the talons of the Indian-like man on his shoulder and he struck the chair with a thud.

"You know what to do with him," Guy went on, addressing Rook who was standing over the boy spy as if ready to receive commands.

"Look out for Rook, my boy. Don't give any unnecessary trouble while you're under his charge. He is like a cat asleep when you do, the claws jump out of the velvet. Again I say, look out."

One of the doors leading into the room opened and shut as Guy finished, and the Dodger found himself alone with Rook.

"Am I to be a prisoner here?" asked Dick.

"You are."

"What right has Gotham Guy to keep me shut up?"

"That is his affair," smiled Rook.

"Don't you know why he holds me?"

The answer was another sparkling of the black eyes, and it was reply enough for the boy in the chair.

"Rook is as cool, as cruel as his master," he thought. "He has received orders as to my detention, and I can make up my mind that he intends to carry them out. I have fallen into bad hands, and just when I want to be free. I have beaten Nero Noggles in his first play, but

here I am—in a fix; caught by the old fellow's partner, Guy Gardette. If I don't get out of here soon, the gang will triumph. I must outwit this human eagle called Rook, and that within a few hours. Can I do it? Is Dodger Dick, wharf-rat and spy, equal to the task before him?"

"Come with me, boy," spoke Rook at this juncture, and Dick was nearly lifted bodily from the chair by the talon-hands, and the following moment he was taken from the room and walked into a smaller apartment, where he saw a little work-bench covered with strange-looking tools.

"I work sometimes," said Rook with a grin, as he noticed the young sleuth's glance and evident astonishment.

"So I see," answered Dick.

Rook took the boy toward the bench, where he placed him in a wooden chair with metallic arms.

As the dark-faced man stepped back, the arms opened on top, and a piece of flexible metal rose out of each one and caught Dick's wrists before he could jerk them away.

In an instant the youthful detective was fastened in the chair, and when he looked up at Rook, the eyes of that worthy seemed to flash with victory and pride.

"What do you think of the wonderful chair?" he laughed. "It is Rook's invention, but it is not the only queer thing he has made."

Dodger Dick was ready to believe this, seeing himself so strangely imprisoned in the chair, but Rook was not satisfied.

He opened a drawer at Dick's right and took out a handful of odd-shaped things which he threw on the bench.

"Look! they crawl!" he cried, glancing at the boy, whose gaze was riveted on the bright insects before him. "They all come from the hands of Rook. He is proud to show them to the bird in the cage."

"What are they for?" asked Dick.

"They are breast-pins for the rich ladies."

"Who else makes them?"

"No one. The hands of Rook are the only ones of the kind in the world."

"Ah! Some of your work gets into the pawnshops, then."

Gotham Guy's jailer gave a quick start, and the next second he was leaning toward Dick, who would have retreated from his burning eyes if he could have done so.

"Where is the 'uncle' who holds one of Rook's wonderful beetles in pawn?" he exclaimed.

"It is not true, boy. Those who buy Rook's work never part with it."

"You may think so, but if you are the sole manufacturer, as you claim, you are mistaken."

"Then let the bird in the cage name the man who holds one of the beetles. Ha, ha, he looks, but his tongue does not speak."

"I don't have to name the man," answered Dick, with resolution.

"Won't you?—won't you?" And the Dodger saw suddenly lifted before him the terrible hands of the swarthy beetle-maker. "If you don't tell Rook, he will make you feel the deadly feet of his pets."

What did he mean?

Dick had already seen that the artificial beetle crawled over the bench by means of some propelling power under their shells, but he could not understand what Rook meant by their deadly feet.

"I don't think I ought to tell you about the pawnbroker," he said.

"No? Is the pin he has like this one?" and the man took up one of the strange bugs and held it toward Dick in his open palm.

The beetle was very quiet now, for it lay like a dead insect in the maker's hand.

Dick watched it closely for a few moments.

"It is very like that one," he replied, catching the man's eye.

"So!" was the exclamation. "Then Rook will consult his book."

Gotham Guy's friend unlocked a little door set in the wall above the bench, and took out a book, the leaves of which he turned rapidly, while his eyes scanned the pages.

At last he stopped and looked at the beetle he still retained in his hand.

Dick, who had been watching him closely, saw a slight change of color.

"The bird in the cage has spoken falsely!" cried Rook. "The person who bought the companion beetle never took it to the pawnbroker. She—"

He checked himself as if he had suddenly reached forbidden ground, shut the book, and put it back into the case in the wall.

"I wonder what will come next?" thought the Dodger. "When I get out of this, I will go straight to Uncle Judas and see for myself. It is strange that I should discover the maker of the mechanical beetles. In heaven's name, what is the wretch going to do now?"

The boy's exclamation was called forth by Rook's sudden action.

He had caught up one of the beetles and thrown it into a glass containing a yellowish liquid.

The toy sunk to the bottom at first, but in a moment it was on the surface where it squirmed like a thing alive.

Rook, the dark-skinned, eyed it for a while, when he snatched it from the glass and turned upon Dick with the beetle held dextrously between finger and thumb.

All at once his other hand was thrown over the boy sleuth's mouth, and his head was thrust back against the chair.

"Dick, the night-fox, shall feel the beetle's feet!" laughed Rook, and the starting eyes of the young detective saw the bug pushed toward his throat.

In another moment the loathsome insect was actually crawling down Dodger Dick's bared neck!

A chill of horror swept through the boy spy's frame.

He tried to shriek, but could not; and the chair held him in its metallic toils!

CHAPTER VI.

A SERPENT IN THE NEST.

"I've got a clear path now. Never before did fortune do me such a magnificent turn. I almost feel the million in my grip. What a play it was, and how Bink's eyes will snap when he hears of it!"

Gotham Guy was letting out congratulations of this sort while he hurried from the trap where he had left the Dodger under the serpent eyes of Rook, the maker of the beetles.

The city sharp was in high spirits and his delight increased as he kept on.

He was going back to the modest little house to which he had tracked the boy detective from the Park.

He was almost certain that Dick had visited the very person for whom the trio had searched New York with so much diligence—Lucy Marigold, the heiress of the fortune the gang had sworn to obtain by means the very opposite of honest.

Nero Noggles had found Mrs. Palgrave, Lucy's landlady, but she had given him no clew; Broadway Bink's tracking had not been crowned with success, and it remained for Gotham Guy to do something that would put them on the road to victory.

Guy easily found his way back to the house. He had marked it well a short time before, and, as he knew the short cuts of the city, he was enabled to reach the spot in shortened time.

Everything was quiet about the premises, and Guy held aloof until he had hit upon a plan of operations.

Drawing his hat slightly over his eyes, he approached the house and rapped lightly; the door had no knocker of any kind.

He was answered by a middle aged woman whose look inquired what he wanted.

The sharp of New York had his story ready.

"I come from the boy who left the house awhile ago," began Guy. "He has met with some trouble, and has sent me to the young lady, his friend, to acquaint her with it."

"Miss Lucy, you mean?" asked the woman.

Guy started with a thrill of pleasure.

"Yes, Miss Lucy;—that is what he called her."

The woman took another good look at the sleek rascal of the city.

"Come in. I will call Lucy down," she said at length as if her scrutiny had convinced her that Guy was all right, and the next moment the sharp was inside.

He was conducted into a small room at one side of the short hall, and left there.

The woman retired to bring her boarder to him, and Guy again congratulated himself on his wonderful run of luck.

He was not left long to himself when he heard approaching footsteps, and a moment later the door opened and admitted a young girl whose appearance delighted him.

There could be no mistake; she was surely Miss Lucy Marigold!

When she noticed Guy she came forward and the sport saw a look of mingled fear and eagerness in her eyes.

"What has happened?" she exclaimed. "You told Mrs. Martin that—"

She stopped so suddenly that Guy smiled, and then she drew off and looked at him with speechless lips.

Did she suspicion him?

"Yes, he is in a little trouble, but it won't amount to much I hope," said Guy in reassuring tones.

"What is it?"

"He got mixed up in a street brawl, was drawn into it by some quarreling gamins, and all have been taken in by the police."

The girl looked relieved, but still she did not take her eyes from the fellow who was lying so deliberately in her presence.

"Is that all?" she asked smiling faintly, and before the shark could answer, she went on. "And did he send you to me with a little story of this kind?"

Guy nodded.

"I don't understand it," continued Lucy. "The police won't detain him long if he proves that he was drawn into the melee as you say."

"He may be kept longer than he thinks, and that is why he sent me here. The police and the court officers are merciless toward the gamins sometimes—"

"But he is no gamin!" cried the girl, flushing.

"Of course not, but you see they may consider him one, and treat him accordingly."

She was silent a little while.

"Where is he now?" she asked.

"I did not follow him to the station."

"But can you not find out?"

"Oh, yes; that is easy," replied Guy, a brilliant idea entering his head. "If you would like to see him—"

"See him to-night—I?" cried the girl, drawing back again, as a slight pallor chased her flushes off.

"It is practicable."

"No; I cannot think of such a thing."

"Then," said Guy, "perhaps I can be of service to you."

He thought that the young girl was pleased with his proffer, but the next moment he was undeceived.

"You have carried out his wishes, and I presume your work is done," she continued. "When he is out of the toils he will let me know it. As he was drawn into the trouble, they cannot hold him. He will prove his innocence; I care not how prejudiced the court may be. I thank you for your kindness, but Dick might have left the story untold."

"He thought first of you, no doubt."

The girl seemed to color.

"I know Dick to be one of the pure gold boys of New York," resumed Guy. "You have known him some time, I suppose?"

"Not for long," was the response.

"Haven't you lived here a long time?"

"Yes—all my life."

"Which is not very long," laughed Guy, in a manner intended to be complimentary.

"You are right," was the smiling answer, and then the girl seemed to retreat within herself, and resisted the shark's efforts to draw her out again.

Gotham Guy was now thoroughly convinced that he had found lost Lucy Marigold, and he resolved to retire on his success.

He asked the girl whether she had any word to send to the arrested boy, and received a reply which somewhat staggered him.

"Dick got into the scrape, let him get out," said Lucy.

"You don't mean that, miss," exclaimed Guy.

"A while ago you were sorry to hear of his misfortune, now you make light of it. As I have said, it may turn out to be more serious than we think."

"Of course I can't help that. Dick has been in trouble before, and sympathy did not help him out, either. I have no word to send him," and the way in which the girl finished told Guy that she wanted the interview to close.

The New York sharp remarked that, as he was Dick's friend, he would do all in his power to secure his immediate release from arrest, and then, with a polite "good-night" to the girl, he left the house, and was on the street once more.

No sooner had Lucy closed the door on the rascal than the woman who had let him in sprang to her side, and caught her arm in a moment of intense excitement.

Mrs. Martin's face was almost devoid of color, and the girl feared she would faint before she could find her tongue.

"Merciful Father! I hope you will forgive me!" she exclaimed. "I ought to be punished for letting that man in. He came for no good—he never does anybody a favor. I did not know him till I sent you to the parlor to meet

him, then like a flash it all came to me, and I knew the fellow as I used to know him."

"What do you mean? Tell me all, Mrs. Martin. I checked myself several times while answering him."

"Thank heaven!"

"Something seemed to tell me that the man was playing a game."

"He was! His very name tells me so now."

"Who was he?"

"Guy Gordette, but called Gotham Guy where he is known by men of his kind. I had not seen him for five years before to-night. He used to board with my sister. It was his eyes that made me recollect him, and even then I could not put them in the right head till after I had sent you into his presence."

Lucy, the girl, stood like a statue before the woman.

"I have heard of Gotham Guy. I have been warned against him, and the last injunction of the best friend I have in the world, was to look out for a wolf in sheep's clothing. Now, this man has ferreted me out! I came away from my last hiding place to avoid the trio who want me, if all that Dick says is true, and I cannot doubt it. Mrs. Martin, tell me what to do. I am in the toils if Gotham Guy has found me. Dick has not been arrested, but something has happened to him; else, how would the villain have discovered me here?"

Lucy—let us say once for all, reader, that she is the true Lucy Marigold—staggered back into a chair completely unnerved, and an object of pity.

Mrs. Martin approached her and bent tenderly over the young girl as she sobbed violently with her white hands over her face.

"If they have found you, child, they may lose you again," spoke the sympathetic woman. "It was all my fault. I let the serpent in. Where were my eyes that I could not see Gotham Guy while he stood on the step? I will make amends for my blunder. If you will only forgive, Lucy—"

"You are already forgiven!" cried the girl, dashing her hands down and springing up. "I am going to meet this catastrophe like a woman. Dick knows why the three villains have been beating New York high and low for me. He has said that they shall not succeed, and I say the same. Now, Mrs. Martin, you must help me turn Gotham Guy's discovery into naught."

"Won't I, though? While we wait for Dick to get out of the snap he is in, we will show Guy Gardette that he has not won an easy victory."

CHAPTER VII.

DOGGED TOO FAR.

"WELL, what success can you report? I'm down in the mouth, discouraged; it looks to me like probing a haystack for a needle."

"Why, we're in luck. You don't want to give up the chase when we're on our last mile and the game in sight."

"In sight, eh? I don't see where."

The two men who exchanged such words sat at a little round table in a private tap-room not far from the scenes of the foregoing chapter.

They were Gotham Guy and Broadway Bink, and the latter was the one who had given utterance to his discouragement.

"What if I should tell you that I have with my own eyes seen the genuine Miss Lucy Marigold?" resumed Guy, with a smile forming at his lips, and a twinkle in his eyes.

"I would pronounce you a fit subject for a lunatic asylum," exclaimed his companion.

"Very well. You may at once ticket me for the place. I have seen the young lady herself."

Broadway Bink drew back with an exclamation of astonishment, and for a few seconds stared blankly at his companion.

"Don't take me up into the clouds just to drop me without warning," said he. "Found Lucy, have you? I would like to know where you ran across this wonderful streak of luck."

Gotham Guy at once dropped his voice to a confidential tone and narrated his adventures.

He began at the discovery of Mother Sturgeon and Dodger Dick in the Park, and finished with his interview with Lucy at Mrs. Martin's humble domicile.

His companion was delighted.

Of course there could be no doubt as to the girl's identity. She was the Lucy Marigold for whom the trio had been looking high and low throughout the length and breadth of Gotham.

"Now, having found her, what do you propose?" asked Guy's comrade with eagerness.

"Your discovery will fetch Noggles down a peg or two, for he pretends to be something of a

detective himself. He blundered when he hired the boy, Dodger Dick, and if you had not arrested the youngster, Guy, he might have given us some trouble."

"Of course, but the Dodger is safe enough," exclaimed Gotham Guy. "Didn't I tell Noggles that I'd net him within forty-eight hours? I guess I've been as good as my word." And the city sharp sent a triumphant look across the table to his friend. "What am I going to do, eh? I don't mind letting Noggles waste a little more time on a blind trail, just to keep him employed. I shall break to him the news of my discovery when I see fit. We will keep a sharp watch on the girl. She did not suspect me, though she made one or two breaks I did not like. However, I played my hand well, and the result is, that we are on the high road to the big stake."

"Which pleases me immensely. I can touch the bottom of my pocket without much effort just now."

The two men laughed together, and soon after left the tap-room and proceeded up-town.

It was the same night of Dodger Dick's incarceration, and but a short time after that event.

On a certain corner several squares from the place of conference, Guy and Broadway Bink separated for the night, after a short conversation in low tones, and proceeded in nearly opposite directions.

"I wonder if Guy really found the girl?" murmured Broadway Bink. "Maybe he was merely spinning a yarn to keep my spirits up. I've known him to be guilty of tricks of this kind."

A few steps further on the New York schemer stopped and reflected a moment.

"I'll go and see what Noggles thinks about it," he thought. "I need not tell him about Guy's find, but I can suppose a case that will get an opinion out of him."

Intent on carrying out the suggestion, the sport turned toward Eighth avenue, and soon knocked at the door leading into Noggles's room.

In a moment he heard footsteps, and when the portal was opened he stood face to face with the third man of the conspiracy.

Noggles looked surprised to see Broadway Bink in his room at that time, but invited him to a chair as he took one himself.

"You don't look like a man who has found a gold-mine," laughed the visitor.

"I presume not," was the response.

"Haven't you found Lucy yet?"

"Not yet, my friend."

"Nor any trace of her?"

"Nothing definite."

Broadway Bink looked searchingly at Noggles and came to the conclusion that he was not deceiving him, though he knew that he was dealing with a shrewd rascal, whose sole object seemed to be the accumulation of money.

"Now suppose a fellow watches a certain boy till he dodges into a certain house on a certain street?" said Bink, crossing his legs and assuming an important air.

"Well, what of that?"

"And suppose further, that when the boy comes out, the watcher goes in and discovers there a young girl with beautiful dark eyes, a good figure, and just the slightest tripping in her speech? The girl is a boarder, and has been hidden by the boy for a certain purpose. Now, what would you say, about a case of this kind?"

Noggles appeared to treat his visitor's supposition with indifference.

"I would not give it a second thought," he answered, with a careless gesture.

"Really, wouldn't you?" cried Broadway Bink, bending quickly forward.

"Why should I?" responded Noggles, haughtily. "A thousand boys may be tracked to as many houses in this city, and more than one may contain a young creature who answers to the brief description you have given."

Broadway Bink was taken aback.

"Why have you put such a case?" continued Noggles.

"Oh, I just happened to think of it. Queer, isn't it, Noggles?"

There was no answer, but Broadway Bink saw the keen eyes of his companion riveted upon him.

"The fellow is no fool," thought Noggles. "He has a secret which he wants to keep, but which has cropped out to get an opinion from me. I'll get rid of him, and then—I'll do a little sly work on my own hook."

If Broadway Bink considered himself shrewd, he had a formidable rival in Nero Noggles, and no sooner had the smooth-faced rascal got rid of him than he had a sleuth at his heels.

Noggles believed that the case put by Bink was more than a supposed one. He argued that the girl with dark eyes was no myth, and also that Bink had stumbled against some piece of luck.

"If he knows where the girl is, he will lead me to her," muttered Noggles. "If he or Gotham Guy are playing against me, they may fail to their sorrow."

For some distance he dogged Bink with the pertinacity of a shadow.

All the time he was afraid that the fellow would take a car and elude him, but fortune seemed to favor him through the chase.

Broadway Bink knew the street inhabited by Lucy Marigold much better than Guy Gardette knew it, and while the city sharp and Dodger Dick's enemy had not exactly located the house, he believed he could find it with little trouble.

Anxious to find Lucy for himself, Bink sought the street from Noggles's quarters by the shortest route.

He did not know that his suspicious partner was dogging his steps through gas-light and shadow, and he unconsciously led Mr. Noggles toward the prize they had sought so long.

"This is the place!" ejaculated Broadway Bink, surveying the front of a small building as he passed it with slow steps. "Guy told me just enough to let me make sure of it. It doesn't look like a hard fort to storm."

The man turned back before he had passed the house very far and looked at it again.

It stood at the edge of an alley the mouth of which was narrow and dark.

"I've got a few tools with me," said Bink to himself. "It's been a long time since I've done any thing of the kind, but I guess I haven't lost my vim."

He turned suddenly and plunged into the alley, and the next moment a man who had been watching him did the same.

Broadway Bink felt his way alongside the house till he came to a board fence which was quite close, but which did not promise to be hard to scale.

"I'm not going back till I know whether Guy really saw Lucy, the heiress," he exclaimed. "If he doesn't want to spin the whole yarn to an old friend, why, he must not growl if that friend plays a little game on his own hook."

The following moment Broadway Bink caught the top of the fence with his hands, and was about to pull himself up, when a sound smote his ears.

Quick as thought itself he whirled toward the mouth of the alley, and saw, not ten feet away, the figure of a man.

"Shadowed!" flashed through the sport's mind. "By Jupiter! I won't be watched in a case of this kind. I'll show the spy that the game he hunts has teeth!"

All at once Broadway Bink dashed straight at the statue-like figure before him, and in an instant had caught a stretch of throat in his tigerish hands, and was forcing a man toward the house.

"No spy follows me and lives to tell the story," hissed the New York sharp, and then he threw his enemy against the boards again and again, as if the nature of a real tiger had been stirred up in his bosom.

The man resisted with all his strength, but rage-armed Bink was too much for him.

"Don't!—don't!" he gasped at last. "Heavens!—you—don't—know—me. I—am—"

"Who?—who?" laughed the infuriated sharp.

"I—am—Noggles!"

Noggles!

Broadway Bink sprang back with a cry, and the man fell to the ground.

CHAPTER VIII.

GETTING OUT.

LET us go back to Dodger Dick, the young sleuth whom we left in the toils in the trap set for him by Gotham Guy.

It will be remembered that we saw him last in the chair whose metallic arms held him with a grip from which there seemed no release.

Not only this, but the swarthy maker of the mechanical beetles had applied one of the strange bugs to the boy's throat and sent it downward toward his bosom.

Dick felt a horrible burning sensation whenever the feet of the beetle touched his skin. Needles of hot steel seemed to pierce his flesh, and he could follow the insect's trail by the agony it caused.

All the while the eyes of Rook glittered like a serpent's in his head.

Dick could not cry aloud, for one of his persecutor's hands was pressed firmly over his mouth.

The boy ferret, for the first time in his life, gave himself up for lost.

At length the sting of the beetle's feet died out, but in its stead came a sudden faintness which the Dodger could not overcome.

The face of sport's tool grew indistinct; and when he removed his hand from the boy's mouth he lay listless, if not dead, in the chair.

Rook stepped back and looked at his work.

Wherever the beetle's feet had touched the flesh there was a mark which grew darker, and on either side the skin was as white as snow.

Dick was left in the chair until the beetle fiend had restored his infamous bugs to the drawer in the bench, then the metal hands were released from the wrists and the wharf spy lifted from the trap.

He was limp and white in Rook's arms, and, after gazing at him a few moments longer, the man, with his burden, left the room.

Five minutes later Rook was back at the work-bench with no signs of his cruel triumph in his eyes.

What had he done with Dodger Dick?

In another part of the house where darkness was almost visible, the young victim of Guy Gardette's trap rolled and tossed on a bed upon the floor.

Dick had come back to consciousness, but it was accompanied by the most intense pain. He would touch that part of his body over which the beetle had crawled to suffer new agonies which almost drove him mad.

At last he put out his hand and touched a stone pitcher that contained water.

Lifting it to his lips, he took a few swallows only to utter a wild cry and dash the vessel against a wall where it was broken into a thousand pieces.

"This is a trap, sure enough!" he exclaimed. "I have fallen into the clutches of fiends, and all because I have discovered the young girl whom the money gang of Gotham want to use to enrich themselves. Nero Noggles told me just enough to put me on the trail and to give me an insight to their rascality. I wonder if I was tracked from the Battery by Guy Gardette? If I was, then he knows where Lucy is, and she will become the next victim. Lucy Marigold is the heiress of a vast sum of money, and Guy and his partners know it, too. But are they to win? Must I perish in this awful trap, the victim of Rook, the merciless, and his poisonous beetles? I told Mother Sturgeon that I would look out for number one; but here I am, caged like a bird, and trapped like a blind rat!"

Dodger Dick thought he would die before the new agony caused by taking the water passed off.

After a time he felt better, and with the change came resolves to escape.

He left the cot, which was nothing more than two blankets on the floor, and inspected his prison by the sense of touch, for his keen eyes afforded him no assistance in that place.

He found no door, which was very curious, and suggested a secret entrance, but the walls were smooth as glass and almost dissipated this thought.

If he could discover no door he found what appeared to his touch to be a closed window.

Dick felt it over as high as he could reach, but there was no break in the surface of the boards.

Escape grew more and more hopeless, but the young spy of the docks did not despair.

"Rook evidently thinks that his beetle finished me," thought the Dodger. "He has gone back to his bench no doubt, chuckling over his victory. I know I saw a beetle like his at Uncle Judas's pawnshop, and if I ever get out of here I'll look it up."

If he ever got out!

Dick kept at the window, reluctant to give it up.

It seemed his only avenue to freedom, though it was apparently as solid as a stone wall.

After several efforts he drew himself up on the slight sill and felt higher.

At the top of the window he found a place for his fingers, and, with an ejaculation of joy, thrust them behind the upright boards.

Dick did not feel the poison of the beetle now. His discovery appeared to have chased the agony from his body, and he gathered his strength for the task before him.

For five minutes the boy sleuth of New York stood on the window-sill and carefully examined the top line of the boards.

"Here goes!" he said, at last. "I wish I had the strength of Samson for a minute, but I have to put up with that which belongs to Dick Sly."

Then with both hands inserted behind the boards which did not touch the top frame of the window by a mite, he pulled back with all his strength.

He did not stop to consider that he might be trying to get out of one trap into another, that the place beyond the window was only another apartment of Rook's house.

What he wanted to do was to get out of the dungeon he was in. He was willing to let the future take care of itself.

Dick exerted his whole strength with his feet braced on the sill where he had firmly planted them.

All at once the boards gave a little, then a little more, and Dick was thrilled when he found that he had loosened them, and that without noise enough to cause alarm!

"I'll not crow till I'm out of the woods!" he thought, as a disposition to shout took possession of him, and while he rested and took breath he felt that he had achieved a great triumph.

Dodger Dick went back to his work with renewed hope.

He pulled the boards back till he could feel glass beyond, thus confirming his guess that he had attacked a real window.

He worked on until he had removed the barricade, when he discovered that the lower sash was fastened down by a nail above it.

This proved no obstruction and soon the nail was in Dick's possession.

He now raised the window and looked into darkness as dense as that which had surrounded him before.

"Out of night into night!" cried Dick. "But I'm not going to flinch just because I can't see my way. There's too much at stake to make Dick the Dodger turn back at this stage."

He leaned into the gloom beyond, but could not touch anything with his hands.

Then he took one of the loosened boards and felt with it, but with the same result.

Dick shut his teeth firmly together, and resolutely lowered himself into the unknown space beyond the window-sill.

"I have dropped into the unknown before," murmured he. "I am going to trust to fortune for a safe plunge. Here goes, hit or miss," and he loosened his grasp and fell.

Whether fortune was watching over the young sleuth or not, he struck with a suddenness that drove him back and let him fall to the ground.

"It was a longer drop than I expected!" exclaimed the Dodger as he scrambled to his feet none the worse, fortunately, for his venture. "I'm in a new trap sure enough; but there is a way out at any rate," and Dick laughed lightly when he thought of the place to which the one way led.

The wharf spy found himself in a place larger than the trap to which Rook had carried him after the crawl of the beetle.

It was a room that was not without a door like the other, and when Dick discovered that the portal was not even locked, that he had but to lift a latch to open it, his joy was with an effort kept within bounds.

Dodger Dick still found himself under the roof where he had passed through the beetle-maker's hands, and his first thought was to get beyond it into the streets of New York.

He opened the newly discovered door and stepped into the apartment beyond.

It was a narrow place, not unlike a hallway, but Dick did not stop to inspect it.

At one end he found another door not much larger than the portal of a closet, and on opening this he felt air on his face.

Had he reached the street?

Acting still on his resolve not to turn back, the Dodger pushed forward again and in almost less time than it can be recorded, he stood in the open air, but in the small back-yard connected with the house of the trap.

Dick looked once at the building behind him, but it revealed no traces of inhabitants, then he scaled the fence beyond and once more found himself on the streets of Gotham.

"I guess you didn't keep me, Rook?" he ejaculated, laughing as he moved on. "The next time give your beetle a little more power and make your windows more secure. You'll have to do some fine playing now, Gotham Guy, if you win the shrewd game you and your pals have in hand."

Dodger Dick believed that he had located the house when he started off and turned his face toward the premises where he had left Lucy.

He was anxious to know whether the rascal who had entrapped him had discovered her.

He had not proceeded far when he stopped and leaned against the wall of a building.

Lifting one foot, he proceeded to take off a

shoe, which he turned upside down as he bent over the sidewalk.

Something small and bright dropped out.

Dick pounced upon it like a hawk, and seized it with an exclamation of discovery.

It was the beetle which had burned a trail over his skin!

CHAPTER IX.

MISFORTUNE AND LUCK.

"WELL, this is luck, and no mistake!" was the boy's exultant cry, as he held up his find and inspected it in the light of the nearest lamp, but a few feet off. "I thought I had seen the last of Rook's instrument of torture, but it has persisted in keeping me company. I can now compare it with the odd-looking breast-pin I saw at the old pawnbroker's a few weeks ago, and since I know what these strange beetles are capable of doing, I think I can bring a new sensation on the town."

Dick finished by wrapping the beetle in a piece of paper and transferring it to his pocket, after which he resumed his journey.

Not long afterward, he reached the vicinity of the modest-looking house at the mouth of the alley on O—street, and taking a night-key from his pocket—a key which Rook had not disturbed—he quietly let himself in.

"It is very still here," said the Dodger, half-aloud, when he had shut the door behind him and advanced to the stair. "I don't like this silence. Mrs. Martin prides herself on being a light sleeper, but I see I have to waken her this time."

The boy detective went direct to the room occupied by Mrs. Martin, Lucy's landlady, for a bedroom, and rapped lightly at first, then with a little more emphasis.

He was rewarded with no response, and after waiting awhile for one, he made bold to enter the chamber, only to find it without a tenant.

"Gone!" cried Dick, starting toward the door. "My worst fears are realized. Gotham Guy has been here, and Lucy has fallen into the snare of the money-sharks of New York. But what has become of Mrs. Martin?"

Not willing to give up, though he believed he had guessed the truth, Dodger Dick gave the house a thorough overhauling, but made no discoveries that enlightened him.

"I must have been watched in the Park while I talked with Mother Sturgeon," thought he. "I unconsciously led the sleuth-hound of the trio to Lucy's hiding-place, and having disposed of me, as he thought, he swooped down on the girl, and played a cool hand, just like the sleek fellow he is."

There was nothing to keep the Dodger in the deserted house, so he left it secretly by the back way, lest an enemy might be on guard in front, and in a short time he was hastening over the sidewalk perplexed and outwitted, but with a stout heart and not discouraged.

As he had said more than once, there was too much at stake for him to give the girl up.

He had found out that she was the rightful heir to a piece of property which could be obtained only by producing her in court or by furnishing conclusive evidence of her death.

Mr. Nero Noggles had made this discovery some time before the date of our story, and as at the time he was the associate of Gotham Guy and Broadway Bink, a cabal was secretly formed.

Noggles had heard somewhere of Dodger Dick's exploits in ferreting out mysterious things, and conceived that he would be the very person to help them find the lost Lucy Marigold who was to be the cat's-paw to rake the golden chestnuts from the fire.

The boy had played his part too well to suit Noggles. He saw that Dick had a mind of his own, and when he began to think that he might see through their desire to find the missing girl, he dismissed him, as we have witnessed.

It would have been good for the three rascals if Noggles had not employed the Dodger at all, for Dick had found Lucy by a stroke of luck. Not only this, but he had resolved that Noggles and his associates should never triumph in the infamous game they had in hand.

After leaving the house where he had left the girl and Mrs. Martin, the young detective made his way as rapidly as possible to his quarters at Mother Sturgeon's.

The old lady's eyes got a glow of pleasure when he presented himself, and he was soon satisfying the hunger that seemed to consume him.

"How is the girl now?" asked the woman.

"Of course you found her—"

Dick looked up with an interrupting cry.

"Of course I did not!" he exclaimed before he thought. "But never mind. You know noth-

ing is lost to me very long in New York. If I have lost Lucy, Mamma Sturgeon, I have found something. Let me show you."

Dick took from his pocket the metallic beetle which he had taken from his shoe on the street, and placed it on the table before his foster-mother.

Mother Sturgeon recoiled with a shudder, and then stared at the contrivance, which crawled toward her after the manner of the live bug.

"That's a breastpin for one thing," smiled the boy, picking the beetle up and turning it over in the light. "It is an instrument of death for another. When these legs are dipped into the right kind of poison, and the bug is sent crawling over the human skin, it makes a track that is pretty sure to end the victim."

"How do you know that?"

"I guess I've had an experience I don't want to repeat," was the reply. "I have felt the fire of the poison in every part of my body, and the wonder is that I am here to tell the story. It may be that the yellow liquid was not as strong as the poisoner supposed it to be. Something—I cannot tell you what, Mother Sturgeon—interposed to save my life."

Meanwhile, the woman had overcome her fear of the metal insect, and was looking at it closely with speechless curiosity.

"Who makes them, Dick?" she asked, at last.

"Rook."

"Rook?" echoed Mother Sturgeon, smiling at the oddity of the name. "And, pray, who has a funny name like that?"

"I cannot tell you. I only know that I passed from Gotham Guy's hands into the talon fingers of Rook. I have come from his workshop; I have seen his tools and a handful of beetles of every color."

"Who are his customers?"

"That is what I want to find out. To-morrow I expect to get on the track of one of them if I can make my old acquaintance, Judas, of Baxter street, loosen his tongue."

"I hope the old fellow will talk."

"I think he will."

Mother Sturgeon looked again at the beetle.

"How long has Rook been making these things?" was the question that startled Dick.

"I don't know. Why do you ask that, mother?"

"I was thinking of something. It happened before you were big enough to think about playing ferret among the piers. But, after all, these beetles that Rook makes may not be connected with the mystery."

"With what mystery?" cried the boy, darting half-way across the table, and catching Mother Sturgeon's sallow wrist. "I want anything you can give me. You have helped me before, and you may do so again."

"It is about the several crimes that hoodwinked the police on Blank street. Of course you do not remember them, but I do, for I was not living in this house then."

"Go on," said Dick, looking the woman in the face.

"Well, one of the crimes was a double one—murder and robbery. A man, reputed wealthy, was found dead in his house one morning. His safe was open and plundered. The police were at fault from the beginning, and the detectives fared no better. The only mark found on the body was a half-circular one that looked like a burn on the neck and across the jugular vein. Some of the doctors said that there were traces of poison in the blood, but they quarreled over how it got there. When you told me that this beetle makes a track that burns like fire, I thought of the crescent on the dead man's neck."

Dick was silent for a moment, then, as his eyes seemed to light up with a sudden gleam, he opened his collar and leaned toward Mother Sturgeon.

"Do you remember—was the track that puzzled the police anything like this?" he cried.

The woman's look became riveted on the sight the boy's hands had revealed—the mark left by the metal beetle on his flesh.

"It was very like that," she answered. "I saw the corpse soon after the discovery, and I have never forgotten the spectacle."

"That is something, Mamma Sturgeon," smiled Dick. "Now, who was the man found dead and robbed?"

"He was known as Rufus Marigold."

"What!" and the boy ferret's eyes appeared on the eve of leaping from his head. "Do you tell me this at this time? Are you not mistaken in the name?"

"How can I be when I used to see him every day, and when I was a witness at the inquest,

though I couldn't throw a bit of light on the mystery? I have said that people thought Rufus Marigold rich. So they did, but the state of his finances rather astonished them. He was worth a few thousand which went—"

"Where did it go?" broke in the Dodger.

"I can't tell you where," replied the woman.

"It was whispered that Marigold had a divorced wife at the time, and that their one child was with her, but I do not know."

"I know!" cried Dick. "I know that the girl I have found is the child of that man, that he left more wealth than any person had an idea of, that it can be obtained for Lucy with a little work. But I've lost the girl, you see," and Dick laughed.

"There are others who know what Lucy is worth, men who want her to line their pockets with her own money, while they beggar her if they do nothing worse. Mother Sturgeon, you have given me a strange history, and, I think, a startling clue. You don't expect me to stay here with Lucy in the coils of the three serpents of Gotham, and with the deadly beetle in my possession. I'm off right now—back to the trail I've lost. Good-night, Mother Sturgeon. I'll keep one eye open for number one," and Dodger Dick snatched the proof of Rook's ingenuity and disappeared before the astonished woman could detain him or even utter a remonstrance.

CHAPTER X.

AN ITEM AND A WAGGING TONGUE.

It may be doubted if a more thoroughly surprised man than Broadway Bink ever fled from his own doings as that villain did when he discovered that the man he had assaulted in the alley was his own comrade, Nero Noggles.

The fellow had not dreamed of such a thing, and he was far from the scene before he even partially recovered.

As a matter of course, he did not go back.

He had given Noggles a good choking, and had pounded him severely against the side of the house, but he did not think that anything serious would result from it.

What was Noggles doing in the alley if he had not followed him (Bink) from his own quarters? Was the old fellow playing a sly hand of his own? It looked like it.

Broadway Bink went to the house where he expected to find Gotham Guy, but that worthy did not meet him, and as it was late and he felt drowsy, he turned in and forgot his last adventure in sleep.

Nothing disturbed him at all that night, and when he awoke the next day, he was astonished to find no trace of any visit by his companion.

Broadway Bink patronized a small restaurant not far from his lodgings, and while waiting for his order, he usually scanned the morning paper.

This morning was no exception, and he had barely opened the sheet when his eye alighted on a paragraph that gave him a slight start.

"San Domingo!" cried Bink. "Was it so bad as all that?"

He forgot the breakfast which had just been placed before him, and his coffee got cool while he read the following item:

"MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR.—This morning, at two o'clock, Patrolman Brewster, No. —, found an unconscious man in an alley on O—street. He was taken to the hospital, where he now lies in a precarious condition. The back of the man's head was a mass of bruises when found, and there are abundant evidences of a severe choking. Papers found on his person identify him as Nero Noggles, residence unknown, and not accounted for in the Directory. The whole affair is wrapped in mystery as considerable money and a gold watch were found in the victim's pockets, pointing to a conclusion that the assault was not for robbery. The latest report from the hospital is that the "pick-up" is in a dangerous way, and the attending doctors say that his mind will be affected even should he recover."

Well might Broadway Bink show a little excitement, as his eyes clearly did, as they followed the account to the end. But all at once his face brightened.

"Deranged men tell no plausible tales!" he exclaimed. "Noggles is not likely to clear up the mystery that surrounds his case, and I am safe after all. I did not intend to administer such a severe lesson, but, then, it will last, and that is something," and the New York sharp smiled to himself as he laid the paper away.

It was later in the day when he ran across Gotham Guy, and found his friend to be in no good humor.

"You must have met with a misfortune," said Broadway Bink.

"Do I look like it? Well, I have had a little

bad luck. But let it go. I'll find what I've lost ere long, and we will yet put our hands on the prize.

Bink wondered to what Guy referred, but refrained from questioning him.

"The boy is out of the trap," suddenly resumed Guy.

"Out of it?" was the exclamation that met the news. "I thought you had him safe."

"So did I. I left him in the hands of a person who, as a keeper, has never been known to fail in duty; but the rat got away."

Bink's look became a blank stare.

"Maybe the youngster corrupted your man!" he ventured, but was instantly met by a decided negative from Guy.

"That cannot be done. The means used to keep the rat in the trap were not as strong as the keeper thought, and his strength and ingenuity secured him his liberty. He shall not enjoy his freedom long. We will soon make up for our failure, and the Dodger will discover that the second trap succeeds."

"What about the girl you have discovered?"

"Oh, she is safe," answered Guy, though his look belied his words. "I want you to watch Mother Sturgeon's domicile to-day."

"For the boy?"

"Yes."

"Do you think he will venture back there?"

"He may."

"Does he know that you sprung last night's trap on him?"

"I think he does," laughed Guy. "I am of the opinion, too, that he doesn't want to repeat his experience in the place. Once is enough for a rat like the Dodger. He won't turn on me publicly; that is, I'm not afraid of any arrest for my little play. The young sleuth will try to work up a different kind of case. He evidently knows why we want him out of the way. I am certain that he has discovered Lucy's work."

"Then, look out!" exclaimed Bink, and before Guy could respond he went on: "Of course I will keep two wide-open eyes on Mother Sturgeon's house all day, or until I see the boy. If I catch him, I'll—"

"You'll do what?" interrupted Guy.

"Why, I'll make it mighty unpleasant for him."

"And spoil the whole thing? No! you will do nothing of the kind," Guy spoke sternly. "I am the one to cope with the weasel of the piers. Because he got out of the first trap is no sign that the next will hold no better. You are to watch, not to touch; remember that. Now go to your post, and let nothing escape your eyes."

Gotham Guy watched his companion some distance, and then moved in an opposite direction.

If the city sharp knew anything about Noggles's condition, he had not seen fit to mention it, and Broadway Bink had kept silent on the subject for prudential reasons.

Guy knew he was telling a deliberate falsehood when he told Bink that Lucy was still where he had first discovered her.

He had lost the girl just as Dodger Dick had done, by finding the house on O—street untenanted by Mrs. Martin and her boarder.

This disappearance worried Guy as much as the wharf spy's escape from the trap, and through Rook's fingers.

What had become of Lucy? Had his visit frightened her off?

He could not believe that Mrs. Martin had recognized him, and he was sure that the girl had done nothing of the kind.

Gotham Guy went back to the trail after separating from the man whom he had sent in the capacity of a spy to Mother Sturgeon's dwelling.

The thread had been broken, but he was resolved to take up the ends and rediscover Lucy, the heiress to the gigantic fortune. He went back to the house on O—street.

Of course the neighbors would know something about the sudden flight of its occupants, and he would get a clew from them.

The New York sport began his work by some shrewd inquiries not calculated to arouse suspicion.

He was sufficiently disguised to prevent discovery, and it would have taken eyes as sharp as Dodger Dick's to have looked beyond his mask.

Guy found just across the mouth of the alley a small store presided over when he went in by a woman whose tongue, when started, did not know when to rest.

He bought a few cigars and then opened the ball.

He wanted to engage a room in the vicinity, and said incidentally that he had been informed

that Mrs. Martin who lived somewhere near sometimes let out a part of her house.

"Mrs. Martin and her one boarder went away last night," was the reply that thrilled Guy.

"Then I'm out," he laughed. "But are you sure she went away to stay? he added seriously."

"I think she did."

"Why would she take her boarder with her?"

"The young girl wouldn't want to keep house alone. She might have stayed, though."

"Mrs. Martin?"

"No, the girl."

"You've seen her, then?"

"Once. I went over to Mrs. Martin's unexpectedly to her and came upon the boarder before she knew I was near. She's a pretty creature, and came there some time between two days. That's about all I know about her."

"I'm sorry," said Guy, "though Mrs. Martin could have found no room for me if she already had a boarder."

"Perhaps not, sir."

"I presume you don't know whither the lady went?"

"Not exactly but I've an idea."

Guy almost betrayed his eagerness by an exclamation.

"Has she left the city?" he asked.

"Bless you, no. I think she has gone to her sister's. She keeps, or used to keep, boarders, and I think she lives on Tenth street."

"You don't know her name, I suppose?"

"It is something like Moxly. That isn't it, though."

"Is it Matson—Mrs. Eve Matson?"

"That is it!" cried the woman.

"Is she Mrs. Martin's sister?"

"She is nothing less. I've heard Mrs. Martin mention her a thousand times. I don't think Mrs. Matson keeps boarders now."

"She did when I boarded with her some years ago; but I never saw Mrs. Martin there," thought Guy.

He pursued his inquiries a little further, and found that the garrulous woman behind the counter had the best of internal evidence for believing that Mrs. Martin and Lucy had gone to Mrs. Matson's.

"Aha!" he cried when he found himself out on the street again. "I wasn't long striking that lead. With Noggles about to turn over his accounts in the hospital, and with the boy spy enjoying a very brief triumph, I don't see any cause for despairing. If the two women are sisters, I have located the flown bird. I must have been recognized on my visit, hence the sudden flight. Let me see. I must change my plumage before I make the next move and to do that I have to go back to the old quarters," and Guy sprung upon a passing car, and was soon thinking over his plans as he was carried down town.

CHAPTER XI.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

"I DON'T regard the trail as being lost. It is a part of my doctrine never to give up."

"I know that, Dick, but the fellows you are fighting are full of cunning and nerve, and if they get another chance at you, you won't get off as well as you did before."

"Ha! don't I know that?" laughed the Dodger whose words had been addressed to a young man with whom he sometimes exchanged opinions of various kinds.

Jack Jilson was an "occasional" on the staff of one of the city papers, and Dick used to remark good-naturedly that he was the only reporter he knew who wouldn't give a good thing away without permission.

"Now, Jack," Dick continued. "I am going to let you into another secret."

"You are rich in them!" was the retort.

"One hour you have discovered a long-missing heiress, the next you fall into a trap and pass through an ordeal thrilling enough to turn into a column of sensational matter, now you suggest something further."

"Do you know Judas of Baxter street?"

"The swarthy old uncle who deserves the nick name he bears? Don't I know the old rascal though?"

"Well, I have just come from his place."

"You? What took you down there?"

"A little bit of business, of course," smiled Dick driving one hand into an inner pocket.

The young reporter watched the hand eagerly as it came forth, and when he saw Dick slowly undo a paper-covered packet, he leaned nearer and held his breath.

He saw the boy spy of the docks bring into view an object that exactly resembled a beetle

whose polished back shone in the ray of sunlight that entered the room by the window.

"I went down on Baxter to see if Judas had anything like this," the Dodger went on, holding out the insect between thumb and finger.

"Like that? Of course he hadn't. Judas is no naturalist."

"Well, he did have the exact counterpart of this bug," grinned Dick. "I had to play my cards pretty fine to get a peep at it, for the old fellow keeps it in his safe; but Judas and I have always got along pretty well together, and this time was no exception. This beetle never lived, though it can crawl as good as any living one," and Dick tossed the insect upon a table, where it began to move, greatly to Jack Jilson's astonishment.

"It is wonderful," exclaimed the reporter.

"But I don't see what the bug has to do with Lucy Marigold."

"A good deal, maybe, before we get through with the case," answered the Dodger. "As I have said, I saw the counterfeit beetle in Judas's possession. He described to me the person who pawned it some months ago."

"He did not advance much on it of course."

"Not much. The value of the beetle to some persons lies in the work it is able to perform. It makes a queer breastpin, but it is as deadly as the poison rings I've read about in books."

The reporter did not speak.

"Now, Mr. Jack Jilson, I want to ask you if you have ever heard of the mysterious Marigold murder case of some years ago?"

"Certainly I have," and the speaker crossed the room, his own, and took a paper-bound book of some thickness from a shelf. "It is in there," he went on, throwing the book into Dick's lap. "There are accounts of some of the strange cases that have baffled the police of this and other cities, and among them you will find the 'Marigold Mystery' as it is called."

Dodger Dick turned the leaves until he reached the proper page, and the reporter watched him while he became absorbed in the narrative before him.

"I see!" he suddenly exclaimed. "This account mentions the singular crescent found on the dead man's neck."

"So it does," assented Jack.

"Well, a beetle just like this one made the mark."

The young news-hunter bent forward with a cry of surprise.

"Don't it strike you that way now, Jack? Look at the feet of this insect. If you examine them under a microscope you will see that they are hollow, though they have points like needles. From them came the poisonous fluid that almost finished me. It ended the career of Rufus Marigold, Lucy's father."

When Dick finished, the eyes of Jack Jilson were riveted upon him.

"Prove it! Make this clear and I'll write you up as the greatest young sleuth of to-day!" cried the reporter, excitedly. "Why, in detective circles they still talk about the Marigold mystery. That man Lucy's father? I never connected the two, although you have spoken her name in my presence fifty times."

"I intend to prove it, Jack," replied Dick, with resolution in his tones. "Of course Gotham Guy and his pals wouldn't have me do so for the world. Now, what you have to do is to help me find the girl, who disappeared while I was in the trap."

"I am at your service."

"Thanks. I can't run two trails at once. Lucy first, the other proof afterward. You have never met this young girl, Jack, and when I have found her again, as I shall, I will see that you get to pass judgment on her good looks. The gang knows that I am out of the trap. On my way up from Judas's I met Broadway Bink going down-town in a hurry. I think they will shadow Mother Sturgeon's place, while they set another trap for me. I am going to leave the beetle to your care till wanted. When I ask for it you will know that I am about to astonish some people."

Jack took the metal bug and locked it up carefully in a trunk in one corner of the room, after which Dodger Dick bade him good-morning and took his departure.

"They won't get the bug if they do noose me again," laughed the boy ferret to himself, when he left the house. "I thought best to put it in safe hands, for Rook may want to recover it when he finds that it is nowhere in the dungeon from which I made my escape. Aha! Rook, my ingenious friend, we may meet again some time."

Dodger Dick was intent on finding out what had become of Lucy.

He believed that Gotham Guy was in some manner responsible for her disappearance.

Nero Noggles, the papers had informed him, was at the hospital, the victim of a very mysterious occurrence in the alley on O—street.

The Dodger went back to Mrs. Martin's little house.

He found it still empty, from outward appearances, but they did not satisfy him.

Some hours had elapsed since his escape from Guy Gardette's trap, and he argued that Mrs. Martin might have returned, despite the stillness that brooded over the premises.

Dick gained the rear of the house and reached it through the cramped back-yard attached to it.

Broadway Bink had a similar feat in his mind, as we have seen, when he found himself followed by Nero Noggles on whom he turned like a tiger.

But Dick in one respect was more fortunate; he did not have the smooth-faced rascal at his heels.

He found the back door unlocked, and a minute later he stood beyond the threshold.

It was daytime in the city, but the room which he entered was quite gloomy owing to lowered curtains.

Dick stepped to the window and let in more light.

A glance about the apartment told him that the place was in the same condition in which he had left it on his former visit.

Mrs. Martin had not returned.

"I don't think Lucy's landlady would betray her," the boy mused. "She entered enthusiastically into my scheme to keep the girl concealed. If Gotham Guy got them away without using force, I would like to know what kind of a lie he told. Lucy was warned to trust no one. Hold!" and he started back as a certain thought flashed across his mind. "Maybe the villain came back here as a messenger from me, and got the two into his clutches by a play of that sort."

Dodger Dick had not taken this view of the case before, and for the next few moments some strange ideas were the tenants of his brain.

"If by chance Mrs. Martin took Lucy off to escape the gang, I think I know where to look for her!" he thought. "She told me once about a sister who lives in Tenth street. I might follow out the idea. If she has not been there, I will not have lost much time. I've picked up threads before this where I thought none existed."

Dodger Dick turned quickly toward the door by which he had entered the room, and the next second, with a wild cry that was forced from his throat, he recoiled almost to the wall at his back!

And well might he retreat with a blanched face and dilated eyes, and then with bated breath glare at the man who stood in the doorway with the grin of a demon on his sallow countenance!

Unknown to Dick, and unheard by his keen ears, the subtlest enemy he possessed had stolen a march on him, for as large as life before him stood—Rook, the beetle-maker!

A cramped space of not more than ten feet separated the pair, and Dick had not recovered from the horror occasioned by the spectacle in the door, when the beetle fiend, with a cry which was half a growl of rage, launched himself forward.

There seemed no escape from recapture, and Dodger Dick had no desire to submit to another terrible ordeal at the swarthy demon's hands.

Dick threw up his hands in self-defense as Rook sprang forward, and succeeded in avoiding the talon-like fingers that sought to close on him.

Rook let slip a curse of rage and charged anew, but the agile Dodger again eluded him and reached the door.

"Hands up!" cried the beetle-maker, and the boy saw a revolver in the fellow's clutch.

Dick's reply was a resolute "never!" which Gotham Guy's tool did not hear, and as he leaped back regardless of the leveled weapon and slammed the door in the man's face, a bullet crashed through one of the panels just above his head!

The next moment, Dick the Dodger was in the back-yard, flying for his life.

CHAPTER XII.

A WOLF IN WOOL.

"THAT'S what I call pretty close!" was the boy's exclamation, when he found the high fence of the back-yard between him and the house. "Rook is determined to make amends for his

failure of last night, and I have to be on the lookout. However, he did not get to win by the hand he played back there, and Dodger Dick is still able to fight."

If the baffled beetle-maker had followed the young detective, as he might have done, he would have seen him disappear around the nearest corner.

But Rook did not seem disposed to try again; not for the present, at least.

Dodger Dick had slipped through his fingers at the very moment when he considered success certain, and his failure appeared to stun him.

Instead of pursuing the boy, he looked through the house but took nothing, and finally withdrew as quietly as he had entered.

Perhaps Rook thought that the boy would seek to turn him over to the police, but such was not Dick's intention.

"The next time!" hissed the beetle-maker through his teeth, and then he mingled with the people on the street and was lost to view.

If he had known that "the next time" was never to come for him, he might have looked for his little enemy instead of going back to his workshop and his beetles.

Dodger Dick had already turned toward Tenth street, where he intended to visit the home of Mrs. Martin's sister in hopes of finding Lucy Marigold safe there.

But somebody was ahead of him, and to that person it is our duty to return.

We left Gotham Guy on the way to his downtown quarters for a disguise in which he hoped to penetrate to Mrs. Matson's house.

The information which he had obtained of the woman in the grocery on O—street, had filled him with high hopes.

He was confident that he would find the fugitives at Mrs. Matson's, and when he emerged from his lodgings in garments that seemed an effectual disguise he laughed to himself over a victory he believed already won.

So desirous was he of making his proposed visit a success that he sacrificed his mustache, and his face now bore no resemblance to the one so well known to his friends.

Guy did not like to part with the ornament, but policy overcame every other argument and it went.

A car took him back up-town, and about the time of Dodger Dick's encounter with Rook in the deserted house, he walked boldly up Mrs. Matson's steps.

The house was not strange to him for he had had rooms in it long before he began to scheme for Lucy Marigold's fortune, and not a room in it was unknown to him.

His ring was answered by a tidy woman whom he recognized as his former landlady, Mrs. Eve Matson.

Gotham Guy passed into the house as the door was held open for him, and in a moment he was the occupant of a chair in the little parlor with which he was quite familiar.

Mrs. Matson stood before him with arms akimbo and a pleasant smile on her face.

"She does not know me," mentally exclaimed Guy. "She has not the remotest idea who I am." And then he went immediately to the business before him.

"I am a solicitor of the firm of Fleece and Company, Wall street," he said. "I am looking for your sister, Mrs. Martin of O—street. Our house has it in its power to benefit her in a financial sense. She was not at home when I called, therefore, as we are anxious to find her as soon as possible, I have taken the liberty of disturbing you."

"It is no disturbance at all Mr.—"

"Finn, the 'company' of the firm," bowed Guy.

"It is no disturbance—none at all, Mr. Finn," continued Mrs. Matson with the scoundrel thought, just the slightest accent on the name. "I regret to say that I cannot give you the information you seek."

"Isn't your sister here?" broke forth Guy.

The ever present smile broadened at the corners of Mrs. Matson's mouth.

"If she were, I do not think I would be justified in surrendering the information to Fleece and Company."

A bomb seemed to have exploded under Guy Gardette's chair.

What did the woman mean? Had she penetrated the disguise which had cost him so much care and sacrifice?

"I beg your pardon," he replied. "Do I understand that you refuse to assist us in finding your sister?"

"Not exactly that, but I would like to know first when my old boarder, Guy Gardette, became a member of the house of Fleece & Co."

The discovered rascal nearly left his chair, and all that held him down was the wickedly-smiling face of the little woman a few feet away.

"You labor under a mistake—a ludicrous one, too," he stammered.

"What! aren't you Mr. Gardette?"

Guy put on the boldest countenance he had at his command.

"I don't know the gentleman to whom I appear to bear some resemblance," he cried. "Do you say he was once your boarder?"

"Come, come, Guy," laughed Mrs. Matson. "You have lost your mustache, but your eyes are still the same. You didn't change the color of them, I see. And your voice—I don't find much change in it, either. Let me see. Did you tell me how you came to be a solicitor?"

These words were scorpion stings to the man in the chair.

He knew that Mrs. Matson was certain of his identity, and that all further concealment was impossible.

"As you are determined to consider me your former boarder, I presume you will withhold any information you may have," said Guy.

"I shall," was the tart rejoinder. "You come to the wrong house, Mr. Finn, for news. As you professed to know nothing about Guy Gardette, I might say that the Mrs. Martin whom you seek is not only not my sister, but entirely unknown to me."

Gotham Guy had to laugh in spite of himself. "Very well, then. Keep your secrets!" he exclaimed, quitting the chair.

"We shall, never fear, sir," smiled Mrs. Matson, and that smile haunted Guy long after he reached the street, and made him bite his lip when he thought of the woman whose sharp eyes had proved too much for him.

The blow was too harsh for Guy to resist. He saw that any attempt he might make in that direction would only render matters worse, and baffled and filled with rage, he got beyond the door as soon as he could with propriety.

He had sacrificed his mustache for nothing.

For some time after leaving the house, Guy could not come back to himself.

"I wasn't prepared for a knock down of that sort," he murmured. "Jeh! what eyes that woman has, and what a memory! I would have staked my head against a ten-pin that my own mother wouldn't have recognized me; but here Eve Matson no sooner sets eyes on me than she calls me Guy Gardette, her old boarder. I'm floored—knocked down without gloves at that. This is a piece of luck I didn't see on the programme. It hits me harder than the boy's escape did. But I'm still in fighting trim. It wasn't a wild-goose chase to Mrs. Matson's after all. She knows where Lucy Marigold and Mrs. Martin are. They are inmates of the house I have just left, and at this very minute all three are laughing over the woman's victory."

By this time Guy had reached a hotel where he was somewhat well known, and passing inside, he surveyed himself in a full-length mirror in the bar-room.

A glance at his face, rendered hatchet-like by the absence of the elegant mustache, was enough to bring a volley of curses to his lips, and, unable to endure the sight, he whirled and departed.

On coming out of the hotel he almost ran against a well-built boy who started at sight of him, who, when he drew off, watched him with eyes sparkling with curiosity.

Guy did not notice the youth, who was not willing to give him up with a look.

"I ought to know that gait," exclaimed the boy. "If I am not mistaken, it belongs to Mr. Guy Gardette, the fellow who had me once in a trap that did not hold me long. But where is the mustache he used to keep waxed with so much care? What has happened to cause him to part with it?" And then Guy was permitted to pass out of sight without getting any one on his heels.

Having watched the city sharp out of view, the boy, who was Dodger Dick, went off in the direction from which Guy had come, and a few minutes later rung the bell attached to Mrs. Matson's door.

The portal was no sooner opened from the inside than the youth was caught by a woman and pulled forward with a cry of feminine delight.

"Don't pull me to pieces!" exclaimed the boy with a laugh. "I want to keep my joints in trim a little while yet."

"You shall, of course. They begin to look on you as one dead, or in a trap that will never open to let you out."

"They?" was the echo. "I am neither dead

nor cooped up. I hope you haven't had a visitor this morning, Mrs. Matson?"

"I have had one and his tracks are barely cold. A wolf in sheep's clothing, Dodger Dick, and in very poor wool at that."

"Who was he?"

"Nobody but Guy Gardette, my old boarder. He sacrificed his mustache, but kept his eyes, ha, ha! You should have seen him, Dick. He was in search of information, and got some he didn't want. I informed him that he wasn't Mr. Finn of Wall street, and the news seemed to take his breath. They are here, safe and sound, boy; but I can tell you that Gotham Guy went away confident that he had run them down. I read that in his last look."

"Well, if I have found them I am satisfied," and Dodger Dick drew in a breath of relief. "I was in fear that Lucy had fallen into the clutches of the gang."

"She has not as I will show you," and Mrs. Matson went to the door leading into the hall.

Before she could turn the knob, it opened in her face and Dick the Dodger sprung up with a joyful cry as the figure of Lucy Marigold appeared on the threshold.

"I am safe yet, thanks to the foresight of two women," cried the beautiful young girl, as she came forward, her bright eyes sparkling and her face wreathed in smiles of thankfulness.

"That is grand!" responded Dick. "But the battle is not yet over," he added, seriously.

"No," said Lucy. "We feel that the worst is yet to come."

CHAPTER XIII.

A HIGH PRICED BUG.

In the middle of the afternoon of the same day a man went up the stairs leading to Nero Noggles's lodgings.

It was not Noggles himself for he was still at the hospital. The visitor was our old acquaintance Gotham Guy.

Well did the city shark know that he was making a call in the absence of the occupant of the lodgings, for when he had entered them he carefully locked the door behind him.

Five minutes later Guy was making a systematic search of the rooms that were two small apartments that joined.

He covered his tracks as he proceeded. Those articles which he moved he carefully returned to their exact positions, and once or twice, speaking his thoughts aloud, he said: "He *might* come back; but I don't think so."

The schemer found some papers which he examined very closely, but they did not seem to be the objects of his search.

At last he went to the walls and felt them over for secret panels and hidden recesses.

Gotham Guy was methodical, and the reader, could he have seen him, would have wondered why he was thus searching the lodgings of his old partner, Noggles.

The hunt ended where the observer would not have looked for the end.

Guy discovered a crack in one of the bed-posts near the floor. Taking out his knife he inserted a blade and brought to light some papers adroitly concealed in the wood.

The sharp gave vent to an exclamation of astonishment and triumph as he pulled the documents forth and tossed them upon the table behind him.

"There's nothing like keeping on a trail till you find something," continued Guy seating himself at the table and plunging into the mass at once. "I always thought Nero was keeping something back and doing some work on his own hook. This confirms it. Here are the very documents that establish Lucy Marigold's claim to the big estate. He's been keeping them back while he told me the girl herself would be proof enough. I see through the game now, Nero. By Jupiter! I wish the fellow who sent you to the hospital had given you a heavier dose. You deserve it for playing double with an old pal. Now, I guess I have the best chance. I hold the documents which one must have to substantiate the girl's claim. Why, they're strong enough to play a winning hand with a false heir; but I won't do that. No! I will get there in the end with the real Lucy Marigold."

Instead of putting the papers back into the bed-post, Gotham Guy transferred them to an inside breast pocket after which he left the lodgings and proceeded leisurely down-town.

If he had lost a fine play through Mrs. Matson's discernment, he had made up for it at Noggles's quarters.

Nobody knew him with his shaven face, and in the new plumage he had assumed.

Guy soon appeared in the region of Mother Sturgeon's domicile, where, with very little effort, he found Broadway Bink on guard.

His partner made a report that was not very satisfactory.

Dodger Dick had not been seen by the spy, and he was certain that the young ferret had not entered the house since he had been on guard there.

"Keep up the watch a while longer," said Guy. "The rat will come back to the old hole; all rats do that," and then he moved off, leaving his companion as vigilant as ever.

Half an hour afterward Gotham Guy sat on a stool

alongside a dark man's work-bench, and when he began to speak, the eyes of the two men met.

"What was wrong with your beetle that time?" asked Guy.

Rook snook his head and looked at a glass that was half full of a sort of yellowish liquid.

"Wasn't it strong enough?" resumed the New York sharp, detecting the sidelong glance.

"I'm afraid not," confessed Rook, in undertones. Guy's brows darkened.

"You don't want to fail from the same cause, if you get another chance," said he.

"I will not," and the eagle-claw fingers of the swarthy poisoner snatched up the glass and shook it between Guy and the light till myriads of golden bubbles danced on the surface of its contents.

"Now dip your finger in," he laughed when he ceased to shake the glass, and at the same time he extended it toward Guy, who drew back.

"You don't want to, eh?" cried Rook, with another chuckle. "Well, I would not advise you to," and he set the glass away. "The rat of the river would not crawl off if he could again experience the ordeal he went through before."

"Of course you got your bug back?"

Rook started and gave Guy a strange look.

"No; the rat carried it off!" he growled. "Do you know that he told me that he has discovered another just like it in a pawn-shop?"

"In this city?"

"In New York."

"I thought your beetles never find their way to your uncle's?"

"So they don't, as a rule," answered Rook. "I sell them only on oath."

"Then somebody has broken a promise, provided the boy told the truth."

The beetle-maker was silent.

"Did he locate the pawn-shop?" asked Guy.

"No."

"Have you searched any since?"

"I have. That has been a part of my work to-day."

Rook did not see fit to tell Gotham Guy that some more of his work had been to follow Dodger Dick to Mrs. Martin's house, where he had sent a bullet through the door after the agile young spy.

"Where did you look for your beetle, Rook?" suddenly resumed the city sharp.

The poisoner named a number of prominent pawn-shops, and Guy listened till the list was completed.

"Must you recover the beetle the boy has seen?" he queried.

"I must. I want them both—the one he carried off and the one he has found in pawn."

"I will help you, Rook. I think you have not worked the right field."

"Rook's eyes instantly got a new gleam."

"Where would you look, Guy?"

"At Judas's," was the answer. "The old fellow gets about everything in his net, and he is very apt to be the one who has captured the beetle."

"Do the wealthy patronize him?"

"Very often, when circumstances force them to do so."

"I know Judas, but I did not think of him," smiled Rook.

"Let me try him. If the bug is in his hands, I think I can get a peep at it."

"A peep? That won't be enough. I want the beetle itself. I want to feel it in my hand—it and the one I sent down over the young rat's neck."

Guy promised to get possession of the insect if it was in the pawnbroker's hands, and having seen Rook put in good humor by his words, he withdrew.

"I don't wonder that the old fellow wants his deadly bugs," thought Guy. "They will get him into trouble one of these days. Several times they have fooled the police of New York, but he may send them out once too often. If Dodger Dick succeeded in carrying one of them off, with the knowledge he has of its work, Rook is in danger. The only safeguard is to get the one out of pawn by some means or other, and to finish the game we have against the Dodger."

Shortly after Guy's departure from Rook's place, a dried-up little Jew, half-asleep behind the counter of a pawn-shop, was roused by the entrance of a well-dressed man.

At the sight of a prospective customer the old fellow bounded to his feet and leaned half-way over the show-case, with his nasal, "Vell, vat is it, my friend?"

The visitor, who was Gotham Guy on a mission for Rook, the beetle-maker, studied old Judas a moment and then asked:

"I came to drop money into your purse if I can find anything that suits my tastes."

"Vell, here ish where you ish suited," sung out the Jew. "Beez it diamonds dot you wish to look at, meester?"

"Diamonds? Do I look like Vanderbilt?" laughed Guy.

"Not like William," grinned Judas.

"I thought so. I don't want diamonds, but I'm on the lookout for some odd jewelry—something odd Judas."

"Vat you want to pay, eh?"

"A good price for a good article."

"Somedings rare?"

"Yes, yes."

"Jugs?"

"No; a pin, if you please."

Judas was about to take a tray of conglomerate trash from the show case when Guy shook his head.

"I want something more unique than anything in that lot," he exclaimed, and the Jew reluctantly set the tray down. "See here," Guy went on. "When

I was in Europe last summer I saw a queer pin, shaped like a bug. It had legs, wings and eyes—the oddest pin you ever saw, Judas."

The old Jew's eyes dilated.

"I've caught him!" thought the New York sharp.

"Vat you want to gif for a pin of dot kind?" asked Judas the pawnbroker.

"I'd like to see one first."

Old Judas seemed to hesitate a moment, but like all his race, when a bargain was in view the temptation proved too much for him.

He slipped down the counter, his unctuous face aglow with avarice and Guy, whose gaze followed him intently, saw him kneel in front of a dingy-looking safe.

Presently he came back with something in his hand, and Guy held his breath while the old fellow unwrapped a paper.

The next second there fell upon the glass of the showcase a metal beetle with a polished back.

The sport of Gotham could hardly keep back a cry.

He beat down his excitement, however, and examined the bug like a connoisseur.

"Whose is it?" he asked.

"Mine," replied the Jew.

"What is it worth?"

"It ish not for sale."

"Not for sale, and you old Judas? Come, come, my friend," cried Guy. "What is it worth, I asked."

"Fiftyollar," squeaked the pawnbroker.

Guy covered the beetle with his hand, stepped back, and threw a fifty-dollar bill on the glass.

His action took the Jew's breath.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DODGER AND THE JEW.

JUDAS the pawnbroker did not get a new inspiration till after Gotham Guy had vanished, carrying with him the beetle.

The old fellow snatched up the fifty-dollar bill and ran to the front door, but Guy was not to be seen.

"I can tell der poy dot I vas robbed," chuckled Judas. "Vy didn't I ask dot man one hundred dollars for dot bug?" And an expression of disgust settled over the old fellow's leather-like countenance.

He took good care to put the suddenly-acquired wealth away where it was not apt to be found, and satisfied with his last bargain began to close his establishment.

He was busy at this task when he suddenly caught the sound of a footstep behind him, and when he turned he started on finding himself face to face with Dodger Dick.

"Hello! what's up now?" cried the young detective. "You don't always close at this hour, do you?"

For a second, Judas the Jew did not speak.

His cunning brain was planning a pretty story of deception for he knew that the metal beetle had brought Dodger Dick back to his establishment.

"Judas, I want to take another look at the bug," continued Dick, before the Jew could spin his little falsehood.

"Mine Gott! I vas just going to tell you!" exclaimed Judas. "Since you've been here, I vas robbed."

"Robbed?" echoed Dick, but not without a merry twinkle in his eyes which Judas did not see.

"It vas just dot."

"What did you lose?"

"A good many dings dot vas precious. Among them vas dot queer breastpin."

"The beetle?"

"Alas! boy, dot beetle."

The words were scarcely out of the Jew's mouth ere Dick took a step forward and looked squarely into the old sinner's face.

Judas was an adept in rascality, and had told so many falsehoods to his patrons that he could smile complacently after them. But here was a boy who did not believe a word about the robbery, and whose eyes all the while were accusing him of double-dealing.

"Look here, Judas; I am not here to have you waste time with an account of the robbery. Was your safe broken into?"

"It vas unlocked. Dere vas two rascals."

"And while one stood over you the other plundered the safe?"

"Dot vas how it vas."

"When did it happen?"

"Last night just as I vas closing up."

"Did they use your keys?"

"Yes."

Dick did not continue for a moment.

"I'm sorry I've put you to all this trouble," he resumed. "Judas, you sold the beetle to the man who just left the store."

Instantly the pawnbroker started back with a cry of horror on his lips.

"Don't coin another fiction," said the Dodger, while the Jew stammered. "I know the man who walked out of your store last. I think I witnessed a very business-like transaction over your counter. Judas, you don't play fair with your friends. If you did not sell the bug to the man who just left, produce it."

Judas was staggered again.

"The robbery story is all sham," Dick went on. "Yonder is your safe. Show me the bug or acknowledge that your customer carried it off."

"Look here, poy," cried Judas, assuming an attitude of resentment. "You vas too small to coerce a man like me."

"Oho!" was the laughing rejoinder. "You want to take that turn, do you? Very well, Judas. You don't have to tell me all about your last sale. That

little bug might get you before the courts in a very bad case, and the lawyers might want to know all about the past life of Judas the Jew."

The pawnbroker turned pale.

"Vat about dot bug?" he asked.

"N-ver mind. You sold it to the man, didn't you?"

"I did not intend to. I vos showing it to him as a curiosity, and he bought it against my will. I asked him a price for it dot I thought vos too high for him, but, mine soul! he took me up quick as lightning. Who is dot man?"

"No honest citizen you may be sure."

"Do you know him, poy?"

"Don't I?" grinned Dick.

"Can't you get the bug back for me?"

"I'm afraid not."

The pawnbroker did not seem displeased over the young detective's answer.

If the beetle was returned he would have to surrender the purchase-money, and it was of more value to him than a breastpin lying in his safe.

He did not press the suggestion he had just made, and would have dropped the subject altogether, but the Dodger was determined to give the old fellow a lesson.

"You agreed to keep the pin," he said to Judas.

"Twenty-four hours have not elapsed since you gave me a solemn promise to that effect, but here you sell it to the first man who drops in. I guess you lose by the operation even if you sold the beetle for big money. I won't agree to keep the little transaction of last winter from the police any longer."

"O, it vasn't much!" sneered the pawnbroker.

"Not in your eyes, perhaps," and Dick put on as serious a countenance as possible. "It will read well in the papers, however, and I know a young pencil-shaver who would enjoy an item of that kind."

"But you don't intend to gib me away, eh?" cried Judas, changing his tune.

"I don't make any more promises," replied Dick, drawing back. "You don't keep yours, old fellow, and you must not expect any from me. I've got business elsewhere just now. You won't show me the beetle, I s'ee—"

"Dot rascal bought it when I did not want to sell, and took it off."

"Of course you did not want to sell!" smiled Dick. "You people wouldn't make a dime when you could. Oh, no. Good-night, Judas. I see you've got the right name, and you wear it well, top."

Dick walked toward the door while the pawnbroker hurried from behind the counter to overtake him.

"Shoost von minute," called out Judas, and when the young sleuth whirled he saw the snapping eyes of the old fellow almost upon him.

"You would report dot beetle transaction to the police, eh?" he flashed, lifting his clinched hand over Dick's head and holding it there like a hammer ready to drop.

"What of it?" demanded the boy.

"Eef you do dot, the vengeance of Judas vill overtake you. Look a little oudt, my young ferret." And the claw-like hand closed on Dick's shoulder. "Dot ish all. Now go."

Thus suddenly released, Dick responded with a look of defiance, and the next moment he left the cunning old shark in the middle of the floor.

"I was foolish to trust the shylock," thought the boy as he struck the sidewalk. "But I did not think he would have a customer like Gotham Guy. I see that they are going to get the beetles back into Rook's hands. They have succeeded in getting on, but there is another which they will have to work for. Of course Rook told Guy about the bug, and somehow or other he smelled it out at Judas's. Perhaps he knew beforehand where to go."

Dodger Dick did not attempt to follow the purchaser of the beetle for he felt certain that he had carried it to the trap inhabited by the dark-skinned bug-maker, and he had no desire to find himself again in the place.

He went toward Mother Sturgeon's, and as he reached the hallway that led up to his old quarters, a man on the sidewalk uttered an exclamation of joy.

It was Broadway Bink, the fellow whom Guy had left on guard, and when he saw the Dodger he knew that his vigil had not been in vain.

He waited for the boy to emerge from the building and was soon rewarded for his patience.

When Dick came out he was followed by Broadway Bink, but at a respectful distance; the spy with his cat-eyes keeping near enough to see his quarry all the time.

All at once the tracker saw the Dodger buy a paper of a woman, and the next moment he leaned against a convenient wall, and began to go through it.

Broadway Bink stopped and watched this strange proceeding. If he could have looked over Dodger Bink's shoulder and followed his eyes down the columns, he would have chanced on an item like this:

"It is MURDER.—The 'pick-up,' Nero Noggles, died of his hurts in the hospital at two o'clock today. Just before death came he became conscious and claimed that he was assaulted by a man named Montfort Binkley, who will be arrested on sight if he has not left the city. It is a very mysterious affair, as the man at the hospital refused to state how he came to encounter his assailant in the alley on O—street."

Dick read this paragraph and then transferred the paper to his pocket.

"I'll help Broadway Bink into the hands of the law," he exclaimed. "By getting him out of the way I will be taking one more sleuth-bound from my trail, and Gotham Guy will be the only one of the gang left to fight."

The following moment the spy of the schemers saw the boy detective coming toward him.

He drew into the shelter of a doorway and waited. Dick came along apparently without the slightest suspicion of being dogged; but his eyes were on the alert just the same.

Suddenly they alighted on the form in the door, and in a flash Broadway Bink was spotted.

"On my track, I see!" cried the wharf spy. "Well, Broadway I'll give you a little bit of fun you won't relish. You haven't seen the papers yet."

Already Broadway Bink was after Dick again, and when the boy made a corner, the man increased his gait.

The next minute he turned into another street, and then some startling words sounded in his ears.

"That is the man! That is the fellow wanted for assaulting Nero Noggles." And Bink as he drew back saw Dodger Dick covering him with his finger pointing him out to a policeman.

The fellow turned all colors, and would have fled had not the cop covered the space between them with a single stride, and then it was too late to think of flight.

Broadway Bink did not deny his identity, because he knew that the Dodger knew him too well to make any mistake. He gave Dick a dark look full of threats, and said something about getting even at some future time.

As the prisoner was marched off the boy ferret followed him with triumphant eyes.

"He played into my hands quicker than I thought he would. Now Broadway Bink is safe and Nero Noggles dead; but the coolest head of the trio is yet at large, to fight me to the end." And the Dodger looked serious while he walked off.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FATAL THIRD TIME.

THE various clocks of the great city were striking the hour of eight the night following the Dodger's cute turn on Broadway Bink, when a man who had a dark face and a pair of eyes to match, might have been seen watching two persons who occupied a bench in one of the Park squares of middle New York.

The watcher himself was watched in turn by a woman, who occupied an excellent point of observation.

She was past middle age, and her face bore no traces of former beauty, but she had orbs of vision as keen as those possessed by the single sleuth on the bench.

"You're watching the boy for a purpose, and I know it," murmured the woman while she regarded the man. "I should not wonder if you are a spy for the gang playing against the girl, Lucy. You've followed Dick, no doubt, and while he's talking to Jack Jilson, the young reporter, you eye him like a hawk. I don't have to be at home, so I guess I can watch you as long as you play your sly little hand."

For nearly an hour the man watched Dodger Dick and his friend the young reporter, and the woman, who was Mother Sturgeon, kept her keen black eyes on him.

The lights of the Park enabled the people to watch one another, and it would have been amusing for the reader could he have witnessed the double game.

Dodger Dick had a good deal to tell the reporter, but none of it was to get into the paper.

He had found Lucy and Mrs. Martin, had turned the tables very adroitly on Broadway Bink, and Gotham Guy was the only person left in the drama.

He did not speak of Rook as a foe, and at that very moment the beetle-maker was only a few feet away, playing watch, as the spy of the Parisian police would have played the role.

"Lucy is anxious to see you, Jack," said the boy. "She already thinks a good deal of all my friends, and you are at the top of the list, you know."

The young man smiled. "To-morrow we will go up to Mrs. Matson's and see the girl," Dick continued. "I think nothing serious will happen before then; on the contrary, I expect to run Gotham Guy down before that time. The fellow has not been back to his regular lodgings since he was exposed in his attempt to get at Lucy. Broadway Bink keeps his mouth shut at the advice of his lawyers, and they never will prove that he was the cause of Nero Noggles' death. He is out of the way for the present, at least, and can't help his comrade."

"What about Rook, Dick?" asked Jack Jilson.

The boy laughed.

"The beetle-maker, eh? I presume he is still congratulating himself over the bargain Guy drove with the Jew. If he only had the beetle I carried from his trap in my shoe, he would think himself in clover. But he won't get that one. When I find out a little more about the fellow I will give you the tip, and your paper can get the scoop over all the others in its explanation of the Marigold mystery."

"I'm ready for it at any time," was the reply. "Sail in whenever you please, Dick; I'll make you the lion of the hour in the best English I can put together."

Five minutes later the couple left their settee and the spy deserted his.

Jack and Dick walked toward one corner of the Park followed closely by Rook who was watching the boy for an evil purpose of course.

Mother Sturgeon stepped forward with a nimbleness that did not accord with her age. Her eyes lit up with a light that seemed to lend animation to

her movements, and she continued to watch the bug-demon with unabated interest.

At the limits of the Square Dick and the young reporter separated, and Rook who cared nothing for Jack Jilson kept on after the boy.

Dick was totally unaware of the espionage.

If he had been on the outlook for any one it would have been for Gotham Guy. At that moment he was not thinking about Rook, his old jailer.

Suddenly the beetle-maker advanced with more speed upon the young detective.

Just beyond the Square was a narrow street almost as dark as an alley. It was a short cut to the wider thoroughfare further on, and Dodger Dick plunged into it without heed.

A cry came from Mother Sturgeon's lips when she saw Rook dart after the boy and disappear.

The demon beetle-maker was after the missing insect, but the woman knew it not. She saw in his movements danger to her protégé, and her great desire was to thwart the scheme.

Dick's plunge into the alley-like street and Rook's action was sudden enough to frighten her.

She darted forward, but all at once in the middle of the street which she was compelled to cross to reach the alley, she found herself in front of and almost under the hoofs of a pair of horses attached to a cab.

A startling shriek pealed from her throat, and the driver, never seeing her until that instant, reined in his pair.

But he could not prevent a collision, and Mother Sturgeon, struck by the tongue, was thrown ten feet away to fall heavily on the stones.

It was a fall which would have killed strong men, but the old woman rose to her feet just as the excited cab-driver reached her.

The well frightened fellow caught her arm and began to inquire about her bruises, when he was pushed aside by a strength that astonished him.

"You don't know what you've made me lose!" cried Mother Sturgeon. "I've lost the most precious two minutes of my life. Let me go."

She broke away and darted once more toward the alley, while the cabman did not know whether to laugh or to curse.

However, by the time he reached his seat, Mother Sturgeon had disappeared; the alley had swallowed her as it were.

Not more than two minutes had elapsed since the accident, but they were momentous ones.

As the woman ran up the alley she saw the figure of a man quit it at the other end. This she could do as the shape formed a silhouette against the light beyond.

It flashed through Mother Sturgeon's mind that this was the man who was watching Dick, and the sight lent new speed to her limbs.

With her forehead bleeding from the accident she had just met with, she ran on, and when she struck the street she came suddenly upon a man who appeared to be playing watcher in the shadow of a lamp-post.

"I know what your scheme is!" exclaimed Mother Sturgeon, as she pounced upon the fellow with the fury of a tigress. "You're not going to keep Dick in view to carry out your master's orders. You had better get into better business than playing ferret against a boy."

"Who ar' you talking to?" roared the man, stepping in front of the old woman and lifting a clinched hand. "I don't allow anybody, much less an old hag, to question my business on the streets."

Mother Sturgeon had already seen that she had addressed a man who was not the one she had seen follow the Dodger into the alley, but the fellow was not going to give her a chance to apologize.

Before she could reply, he followed up his words with a brutal blow that sent the poor woman staggering across the sidewalk to hit the building with a thud, and then to fall senseless on the stones.

"The next time you'll let a feller alone," growled the brute, bestowing an unsympathetic look upon his victim, and the next moment he walked off with the step of a victorious gladiator.

He was, indeed, the wrong man, and Mother Sturgeon's eagerness to befriend Dick had led her to commit a false blunder.

Some time afterward the old woman was discovered where she had fallen, and the accident ward of the hospital received a patient who called loudly for "Dick! Dick!" while the attendants stood around and wondered who "Dick" was.

As for the Dodger, he had met with another misfortune that threatened to postpone indefinitely the victory which seemed almost in his grasp.

Rook's first act when he plunged into the alley was to jerk off his shoes.

This rendered his bounds noiseless ones, and the first intimation Dick had of the presence of an enemy was the fall of a hand upon his shoulder.

A look was enough to thrill the young rat of the piers.

He had been caught by the same man from whom he had twice escaped.

"Silence and life! resistance, death!" came in the most serious whispers from Rook's throat as he hustled the Dodger along. "The third time charms, my river Norway, and this catch is number three!"

Dick was dragged from the alley, but the beetle-maker did not stop on the sidewalk. He continued straight ahead, crossed the street almost before it could be seen that his companion was his captive, and entered the alley again.

Not for a moment did his grip on the boy relax, and Dick knew that it could not be shaken off.

"Am I going back to the trap and the beetles?" passed through his mind. "Can't I get away from this demon who is spy, poisoner, and Heaven knows what else!"

There appeared to be no escape for the boy. Half way between streets, Rook turned aside with his prize, and held him firmly with one hand while he unlocked a door with the other.

Dick said nothing.

When the door was opened he was pulled into the house, and forced to occupy a chair in a room where a gas jet burned on the wall.

Rook's eyes were filled with a blaze of triumph.

"I'll take it now," said he.

The Dodger responded with a glance of wonderment as he asked:

"You'll take what?"

"Come, come!" cried Rook impatiently. "You know what I want. You have the beetle on your person. Hand it over."

Dick smiled.

"I don't carry beetles about in my clothes," was the response.

The dark-faced man sprung upon the boy spy, and all at once Dick found himself jerked savagely from the chair.

"Strip!" hissed Rook. "I will have the insect or your life!"

Dodger Dick fell back, and with his figure drawn fully up, gave the villain a look of undying defiance.

CHAPTER XVI.

KEYHOLE REVELATIONS.

"I HAVE something tangible at last. Noggles won't come in for a share for he is out of the way, and the treasures of his room are in my possession. I will see what Mark Moneyfist the lawyer says about the matter. He is shrewd and reliable, and I can afford to pay a good fee to be set firmly on the right track."

Gotham Guy was in the neighborhood of a group of lawyer offices when he gave utterance to words like these and the papers he had taken from the secret recess in Noggles's bedpost were nestling in his bosom.

Five minutes afterward he climbed a not very clean stair to a small office on the second floor, and walked into the presence of Mark Moneyfist, a lawyer noted for sharp practices in the criminal courts of New York.

The lawyer had a rival in the same building; indeed, nothing but a door separated them, but it was never opened, for Moneyfist and Grasper had no business relations between them.

Guy found the shark of the law alone, a lean-faced, gray-eyed man of fifty, who had hampered justice nearly all his life.

He was received with the oily smile for which Moneyfist was noted, and a moment later the two were seated confidentially near each other.

The city sharp had dealt with the lawyer before, and knew that he could trust him to the utmost limit.

After an interchange of courtesies Guy took the newly found documents from his pocket, and opened them before Moneyfist's eyes.

"Look at them," said Guy with a business-like smile as he pushed the papers across the table.

The lawyer went to work at once, and Guy leaned back in his chair and watched him quietly.

"I see what they are," suddenly cried Mark Moneyfist, looking up. "Do you know what has become of the party named so often in the writings—the girl Lucy?"

Guy Gardette's eyes twinkled, which was answer enough for the lawyer.

"I want to know," and Guy leaned toward Moneyfist. "If I produce the girl I can make a stake, can't I?"

"I should say so," was the reply.

"I must have the real heir, too, eh?"

"It would be best, provided she did not get troublesome on your hands."

"Oh, I can manage that, I think," with a laugh.

"Are you sure those papers are genuine?"

"I would stake my reputation on their being so. They bear every evidence of genuineness. Why, young man, I should say you have struck a real bonanza, that is, of course, if you can show up with Lucy Marigold, the person mentioned in these documents."

"Wait a day or two and see. You understand that I want you as my legal adviser in this matter."

The lawyer bowed.

"It will have to go through the courts, I presume?"

"Oh, that will be no trouble. I have managed one or two similar cases in my practice, and know the ropes. Who is likely to fight you?"

Guy seemed to reflect a moment.

"No one will fight me when the time comes," he replied, at length. "I will have every enemy out of the way before then. And by the time we need her, the girl will be tractable."

"That is good, very good," and the lawyer rubbed his sallow hands gleefully. "We will make a team that cannot be beaten. The property must be worth a great deal by this time."

"Almost a million," responded Guy.

"It has accumulated rapidly, I know. I have thought often over this case which the police forgot long ago. I was living in the city then, and I recollect that it created much excitement owing to the supposed wealth of Rufus Marigold, and the mystery that surrounded the murder, for murder it undoubtedly was."

"It was called murder, though some of the doctors said that Marigold died from heart disease brought on by fright."

"I know that, but there was that strange mark on his throat."

"Did you see it?" asked Guy, with eagerness.

"No."

"Neither did I."

"I read all the speculations that appeared in the papers at the time. The strangest one I remember was that a poisonous spider made the mark, and the ingenious writer went so far as to give examples of similar deaths in the warm countries of Europe. Did you read his advice?"

Guy shook his head.

"I have it here in an old scrap-book," and Lawyer Moneyfist got up and took a dusty volume from a shelf.

Opening it at a certain place he laid the book before Guy.

"There are some roughly drawn death-agents you see," he went on as the city sharp's eyes fell upon some queer illustrations of insects, among them a beetle almost exactly like Rook's metallic ones. "I always thought that that reporter drew entirely from his imagination, though he seems to prove that they once used such things in Italy."

Guy did not seem to hear Moneyfist for he was reading the text as if he had become interested at a glance.

"I don't take down the story," he suddenly cried, shutting the book. "That reporter knew too much; he had too vivid an imagination. We won't discuss the Marigold mystery any longer. After a good many years we are the ones to profit by it."

"If you are sure you can spot the girl, we will."

"Sure of it?" and Guy laughed triumphantly. "I would like to know when I've made any mistake. Why, Mark Moneyfist, within thirty minutes I can put my finger on Lucy Marigold, the real Lucy, too, of whom the detectives of New York know nothing."

"What became of her mother—Rufus Marigold's divorced wife?"

"She's dead of course or she would have come to the front long ago."

"That is plausible. While she could not have secured anything for herself, she could have helped her child."

The New York shark gathered up the documents and put them back into his pocket.

Mark Moneyfist followed them with a wistful eye till they disappeared, and wondered why Guy did not intrust them to the care of his safe.

But it was sharp and sharp, and the schemer of the street was as shrewd as the spider of the office.

After a few more words Guy took his departure, confident that he had secured the very man he wanted—a man whom he could purchase with a sum of money which he would not have to pay until he had succeeded with his scheme.

"I wasn't aware that such an article as I saw in the scrap-book existed," mentally exclaimed Guy. "That reporter hit the proper theory whether he stumbled upon it or not. It is a wonder that his suggestions were not carried out. If they had been the Marigold mystery might have been solved years ago. I wish Rook could run over Moneyfist's scrap-book. The old fellow would be carried back to days spent in other lands than this. I won't tell him about the pictured beetles, however. The absence of the one still in Dodger Dick's possession renders him uneasy, and I can't afford to lose his services just now."

Mark Moneyfist illumined his face with a smile when his office door closed on his client.

"That was a windfall, sure enough!" he cried. "He was too sharp to leave the papers with me, and I wasn't going to spoil matters by suggesting such a thing. I would like to have copies of them for my own use; but as I can't get them, I will have to help Guy out and take my chances. He's liberal though, and I have the fellow where I can charge and collect a dandy fee. A client like Guy Gardette would throw Tom Grasper into convulsions," and Moneyfist sent an exultant look toward the door that stood closed between him and his rival in the law's tricks and delays.

If he could have looked through that same door during his interview with the New York sharp, he would have started at a sight not calculated to calm his nerves.

Leaning against the jamb, but with an ear near the keyhole, was a young man bent on catching every word being uttered in the room beyond.

His hat lay on the floor at his feet, and while he listened his fingers moved a pencil rapidly across a tablet he held in his hand.

He was the only occupant of the office, which was Tom Grasper's sanctum, and, in short, he was Jack Jilson, the young reporter, and Dodger Dick's ally and confidant.

Jack's presence in the lawyer's office was accidental.

A short time before he had encountered the lawyer on the street.

Grasper had an item which he was anxious to get into print, and he told Jack to go to his office and wait a few moments for his return, when he would give him the pointer.

With nothing pressing on his hands just then, the reporter complied, and as he sat in Grasper's office waiting for him, he heard Moneyfist's door open, and distinguished the voice of Gotham Guy, the sharp.

The sound was enough to drive Jack to the friendly keyhole, and his ready pencil was soon taking down in short-hand every word that reached his ears.

As he wrote he caught the importance of the "find," and he wished that Grasper would not come back till he had completed his work.

Jack had his wish.

When he left the door and put his work away, Mark Moneyfist was the only tenant of his office, and the young reporter had scored an unexpected victory.

"We will see whether the two rascals will carry out their scheme!" he exclaimed. "It is a fine game to be sure, and one worthy the genius of the pair I have just listened to. So Guy thinks everybody will be out of his way by the time he springs the scheme? That means that he intends to net the Dodger. He won't do anything of the kind, and as for hoodwinking Lucy, he will not succeed there. I will find Dick right away and post him, and then we will move instantly on the enemy's works."

Jack waited no longer for the lawyer but slipped from the office, closing the door behind him with a softness which did not disturb Gotham Guy's friend.

He went at once to Mother Sturgeon's house but found the door locked.

"The poor old woman is at the hospital," said a voice behind Jack, and he saw one of the other female tenants of the building.

"Has the boy, Dick, been about?" he asked.

"No. The man who brought the news about Mother Sturgeon, who was found senseless upon the street, said that she keeps calling like a crazy woman for Dick, and that, from all they can gather from her talk, the boy has met with a misfortune of some kind."

A misfortune!

The information appeared to stun Jack.

He could think of only one misfortune likely to befall Dodger Dick, and that was that he had fallen back into the clutches of the foe.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FALSE WALL.

As we have already witnessed, an event of this kind had taken place, for Dick, who might have been warned by Mother Sturgeon, had been caught by Rook, the beetle-maker.

Let us return to the young detective of the docks.

It was Rook's belief, of course, that Dick still carried with him the insect which he had taken from his house in his shoe.

We know, however, that such was not the case, for we have seen the boy place the bug in Jack Jilson's hands for safe-keeping.

The threatening words of Rook: "I will have the insect or your life," told the Dodger that he had no ordinary man to deal with, but in spite of them he stepped back and looked defiantly at the villain.

"Don't you mean to draw your clothes and be searched?" continued the beetle fiend, his face seeming to grow darker than ever. "I can't stay here all night to humor you, and besides I am not inclined to do so. Strip, I say, and be quick about it, too."

Still, the boy, resolute and cool did not quail.

His posture was striking to Rook, and he had to look the second time to see that Dick really meant to hold out against him.

"I'll crush you like I would an egg-shell!" And the next moment he covered the distance between them and stood over the Dodger with a hand ready to swoop down upon him like the talons of an eagle.

Dodger Dick mechanically threw up his hands, but they were beaten down and the grip of Rook fastening on his shoulder spun him half-way round.

At the same time the rascal's other hand caught him by the collar, and his coat was jerked off in a twinkling and thrown to the floor.

"I have no beetle on my person. A search will not reward you," said Dick.

His manner seemed to impress Rook with his truthfulness.

"You took it from my house?"

"I did; but unknowingly."

"How was that?"

"I found it in my shoe when I got out on the street."

The beetle-maker looked astounded.

"Where have you hidden it?—at Mother Sturgeon's?"

"Do you think I would hide it there?"

"She is your friend."

"But not the only one," answered Dick with a faint smile.

"You would be hard off if she was," was the response. "But where is the beetle?"

"Aren't you satisfied with the one you have recovered?"

Rook started.

"Which one?"

"The bug Guy bought at old Judas's."

"How do you know one was found there?"

"I saw the purchase."

"Confound your prying eyes! they see nearly everything!" cried Rook, and then he lowered his voice as he leaned toward his captive.

"No, I am not satisfied with the one you say Guy bought," he went on. "The one you took away with you is the insect I'm after. You stay here till I find it back in my hands."

"In this house?" asked Dick.

"Here, or in a prison just as secure."

"Very well, Rook, I fear you will have to find the beetle without my help."

Again the eyes of the bug-maker got their old gleam of rage.

"Don't you intend to put me on the trail?" he cried.

"Why should I?" coolly queried the boy.

"To gain your liberty—to save your life. What is the beetle to you, anyway?"

Dodger Dick put up one hand and parted his collar so as to show Rook the track of the burning feet of the insect.

"I want to keep it as a souvenir," replied Dick, with a grin.

Rook did not smile; he knew the boy was "chaffing" him.

"Well, keep scar and beetle," he sent through his teeth as he stepped back. "Put on your coat, and don't murmur at what comes. I will have my property in spite of the secret you want to keep. You have crept through my fingers twice, boy; but this is the third time."

The young sleuth said nothing in reply, but quietly picked up his coat and put it on.

When he had adjusted it he was again addressed by his tormentor.

"Come with me," commanded Rook, and Dick was led from the room through a dark hall into another apartment, where the beetle-maker turned on the gas.

This room had no sign of a window, and the only entrance was the portal which had just been used.

"There are no rat holes here," said Rook, with a smile, interrupting Dick's glance of inspection. "You can't open a window in this room and walk into the street. I will leave you here for reflection. If at the end of an hour, or what you consider an hour, you conclude to tell me the truth about the beetle, you can knock on the door. If I hear no noise by that time, the next move in the game will be made. Beware of it! This is no boy's play, Dodger Dick, even if a youngster is in it. Don't be a fool. Now take the proper view of the matter, and brighten Mother Sturgeon's eyes once more."

Dodger Dick saw the door close on the figure of the beetle-maker, and once more he was shut in with four walls—the prisoner of one of the greatest villains in New York.

For some time he kept his thoughts to himself, and then, despite his will to keep them back, they broke out in a series of denunciations of Rook, and some self-upbraidings for allowing himself to be trapped for the third time.

But the boy saw that such a display of spirit would do no good, and in a little while he was himself again.

Just as Rook closed the door he heard the tones of a clock somewhere near, and he mechanically counted the strokes as they were tolled off.

He had an hour for reflection.

The gas jet that blackened the wall on his right showed him the scanty appointments of his prison.

The walls were smooth and seemed stationary; seemed so, we say, but a close examination convinced Dick that one was not like the others.

It receded a little when he pressed it real hard, but baffled all his efforts to look behind it, and the boy at last, giving up all attempts to solve the mystery, went back to the low stool near the door.

There he remained counting the minutes and looking at the wall as if it had for him a strange fascination of future fate.

The very silence of death came down over the house in which he was cooped up, like a rat in a cemented cage.

Surely he could not be in the same trap from which he had effected his escape with the metal beetle in his shoe. No! Rook had taken him to a new cage, and one that seemed to possess better holding powers than the other.

"A lie wouldn't get me out of here," argued Dick with himself. "Rook is too shrewd to listen to a story and then let me go without security of some kind. He wants his beetle too badly not to foil me to its hiding-place. No, I can't spin a yarn and walk to liberty! If I give the insect up, I will lose the victory I am after. I could not show the world how Rufus Marigold died, and I could not catch the man who made the deadly insect, nor prove that Gotham Guy is cheek-by-jowl with a poisoner."

All at once the unseen clock began to toll off another hour.

Dick sprang to his feet and counted the strokes by the pulsations of his heart.

When they died away he looked at the door.

"I was to announce by a series of knocks my willingness to deliver up the bug," he exclaimed. "My time is up. I wonder if Rook, the infamous, is beyond the door waiting for my decision? Well, the fellow can wait. I will see what awful fate he fields in this house. As he has said, this is not a boy's game. It is a cool scheme against a young girl and her rightful property. One of the schemers is dead, killed by his comrade, and the murderer is in the hands of the police. But Gotham Guy and his beetle-making friend are still at large, and just now they have the best show."

Ten minutes passed in silence after the striking of the clock.

Dodger Dick leaned against the wall with his arms folded and his lips pressed resolutely together.

He was listening intently for a footstep beyond the door, but none greeted his ears.

All at once he made a startling observation, which had escaped his eyes till then.

The top of the wall, which had yielded to his pressure, had moved outward an inch at least.

Dick bounded across the room at this discovery, and confirmed his fears by a breathless examination.

The false wall was leaning perceptibly, and the boy could determine by a mental calculation, that in falling clear down it would cover the floor with the nicety of a carpet cut for the purpose!

Here was a situation so full of horror that Dodger Dick, who had been in tight places before, felt drops of cold sweat come out on his forehead.

He went back to the door which was opposite the false wall, and looked at the almost motionless engine of destruction.

None but the keenest of eyes could see from that point of vision that the wall was moving at all; but the gradual disappearance of certain marks on the

ceiling told Dick that it was descending upon him with the certainty of death.

Rook had resolved to parley no longer for the beetle, and the Dodger saw that he had lost the opportunity of a compromise.

The wall leaned more and more, without the least noise, and began to overshadow Dick like the dark wings of some mighty bird.

At last he saw the ropes that gradually let the wall down.

They ran through the true wall of the house, and were operated by machinery beyond.

"Am I going to be crushed out of existence here, and lose the game and everything else?" passed through Dick's mind. "I started out to win—to beat the gang of three, and to save Lucy's inheritance to her. I had no thought of the beetles and their maker at the start of the trail—I did not know that they had an existence. But I know now. That terrible wall tells me that I have fallen into a trap as frightful as any ever set for human prey."

He was checked by the proximity of the merciless wall, and while he looked at it, with his eyes almost ready to start from his head, the gas-jet went out and he was left in rayless gloom.

Involuntarily Dick uttered a loud cry, and then held up his hands, as if with their feeble strength he could stop the wall.

Vain hope it was!

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SHARP'S CLOSE CALL.

Down, down through the darkness came the horrid thing.

It touched Dick's uplifted hands, and he shrieked again.

If it was solid, and he did not doubt that it was, its own weight would crush him to the floor.

Again and again he shouted for help with all his might; his cries filled the room and seemed to echo beyond its walls.

The slow, bloodthirsty descent of the wall rendered it impossible for him to keep silent.

He felt his hands beaten down, his body was bent under the terrible force, and all at once Dick, the Dodger, with a groan of despair, fell on his face and passed into unconsciousness beneath the engine of death.

Within the following five minutes a man in the next room put a check on some odd-looking machinery which had been paying out several ropes for some time, and walked out with a smile of victory overspreading his swarthy face.

"He took the consequences—the young rat did," he exclaimed. "He thought he was playing with an antagonist of his own years, but he knows better now. The piers have lost their most persistent Norway, and I—well, I have won."

The man left the house, and the first lamp under which he passed revealed the form and features of Rook, the beetle-maker.

He went back to his work-bench and took up some unfinished work as if nothing important had transpired.

Suddenly a little bell hanging over his head sent its musical tinkle through the room, and as Rook turned with an expectant smile, Gotham Guy came forward.

"I was here awhile ago," said the city sharp.

"But you did not find me?"

"No."

"You came to the wrong house."

Guy's eyes opened wide, but he said nothing.

"You can go ahead, now, without looking for snakes in the grass," continued the bug-maker.

"What! have you trapped the one who crawled out of our hands when we had him in this house?"

Rook smiled.

"Go up to the house and see," he answered.

"A thousand thanks!" cried Guy, springing to Rook's side. "Your eyes as much as your words tell me that there has been no failure this time. You worked the wall on the rat, eh?"

The beetle-maker nodded and let Guy go on.

"If you have scored a success, I have done the same, Rook. I have the papers that establish Lucy Marigold's identity. There can be no mistake and no failure now."

"O failure! That is good! When we have found the beetle the boy took away, I will feel young again. He did not have it on his person."

"Then I can lay my hands on it within an hour."

"Are you certain of that?" and Rook caught Guy's arm in a frenzy of delight and squeezed it until his fingers seemed to sink into the flesh.

"I have but to search Mother Sturgeon's rooms," was the reply. "The nest is empty now for I heard by the merest chance that the old woman is at the hospital delirious and badly injured."

"The boy said that he did not make Mother Sturgeon his treasurer."

"He is a sly fox. My life against a ten that a search of the quarters of the pair will give you the missing diamond."

Rook drew back and reflected.

"I will make the search," Guy resumed. "I can get into the apartments by pretending to be a gentleman connected with the hospital. Once inside, I will not come away without the beetle."

"That will work admirably!" exclaimed Rook.

"Now, while you are off on that mission, how can I serve you?"

Guy consulted his watch and looked up with a smile.

"You can go to Tenth street—to number —, and watch the house with the eye of a hawk," said he.

"Is the girl there?" eagerly asked the beetle-maker.

"Lucy is there. I have a scheme which will get her out of the house to-morrow."

"Then, why does it need watching to-night? If I have worked the iron shroud on the rat, who is likely to interfere with our game?"

"The bad fortune which overtakes me when I don't look for it," laughed Guy. "You must go to Tenth street, Rook. Select a good point for observation, and notice every one who approaches or passes the house."

"I am off."

The man with the beetles withdrew to change his dress, and Gotham Guy smiled to himself as he stretched out his hand and opened and shut it playfully.

"I almost feel the million in my palm," he murmured. "It looks to me like there will be no divide, but that all will fall into my lap. Noggles is out of the way, and the law threatens to place Broadway Bink in the same fix, leaving me to enjoy the victory and the spoil. I ought to drink to my success. Rook won't object. Rook is a splendid fellow, without whom I would not be where I am to-night. He must be careful, though, or his bugs will get his neck into the sheriff's noose one of these days."

As Guy finished he left his chair and opened a small cupboard set in the wall.

Selecting from among a number of bottles one that contained a sparkling liquid of a reddish color, he poured a quantity of the fluid into a glass and raised it to his lips.

"Here's to the well-won million!" said Guy. "May we never part company until time and the sexton claim us both."

In another second he would have drained the glass had not the door before him been thrown open and Rook bounded into the room.

A startling cry rung from the beetle demon's throat, and in an instant the goblet was shattered against the wall, and the untasted liquor trickled to the floor, a stream of horrid crimson.

"What was in the glass?" gasped Guy, pale as death.

"Death itself!" was the answer. "Instant death, and after that a revolting corpse."

The city sharp stood rooted to the spot a moment, then his limbs appeared to fail him, and he tottered back to drop exhausted into the chair he had just left.

Rook turned to the sideboard and took out two bottles, from one of which Guy had lately helped himself.

Without speaking, the beetle-maker placed a copper on the table, then with a glance at Guy to draw his attention, he poured a few drops of the liquor upon it.

Gotham Guy leaned forward with eagerness and looked on without speaking.

In a little while he saw the effect of the experiment; the face of the coin turned a dingy green, and while he looked the edge got rough and seemed to fall away.

"What do you think?" asked Rook with a grin.

Guy's teeth chattered from the spell of fear that was still on him, and Rook picked up the second bottle, and a clean goblet.

Guy hesitated a moment when the half-filled glass was handed toward him, but there was safety in the beetle-maker's eyes, and seizing it with eagerness, he lowered its contents at a gulp.

The effect was almost instantaneous.

The sharp's color came back, and his eyes got a sparkle they had not known before.

"From death to life!" cried he, leaping from his chair. "I feel the liquor in every vein. It is magical!"

Rook looked on with a satisfied smile at the corners of his lips.

"You can go to Mother Sturgeon's now," he remarked, and almost before the sound of his voice died away Guy was on the street with the magic wine still coursing through his system.

"A closer call than I like. By Jupiter! I wouldn't have Rook for an enemy for this globe and its treasures!" came from his lips. "If he had not bounded to the rescue when he did, the third and last man would have left the game. Now for Mother Sturgeon's for the missing beetle. I will restore it to Rook, and read him a quiet lecture on caution. So he worked the wall on the rat of the docks! At last Dodger Dick is out of the way, and it is clear to the prize."

If Gotham Guy thought himself unwatched while he pushed toward that quarter of the city inhabited by Mother Sturgeon he reckoned without his host.

A young person of whom he had taken no notice during the entire drama was quietly on his track, wondering while he watched him where Guy could be going at that time of night.

This was Jack Jilson, the young reporter, and it was not entirely an accident that he had spotted the New York sharp on his way to Mother Sturgeon's.

The young man had already been there.

He had been told that the Dodger's foster mother was at the hospital and that some misfortune had befallen the boy himself, and it was natural for Jack to associate Gotham Guy with that evil.

He kept pretty close at Guy's heels as he pursued his way, and when he saw the rascal plunge into the open hallway which led up to Mother Sturgeon's rooms his astonishment knew no bounds.

What had called forth a visit of that kind?

Jack waited ten minutes for Guy's reappearance, but was not rewarded.

His curiosity increased.

"The rascal is up to some mischief," thought he, and then with a good deal of boldness he entered the house on tiptoe, and took off his shoes.

It took Jack but a moment to reach the second

landing, and in a little while he was hanging alongside the door, with his eyes looking down into a room through the transom.

To his amazement he saw Gotham Guy making a systematic search of the apartment.

The sight seemed to fasten Jack to the door, and for five minutes, or until he was almost exhausted, he watched the city shark at his nefarious work.

At last Guy was seen to stop with a look of mingled disappointment and disgust on his face.

"The fellow has failed!" exclaimed Jack. "Mother Sturgeon's house has yielded him no treasure. What will he do next?"

The next moment Dick's friend was on the floor and then he fled down the steps at the bottom of which he seized his shoes, and darted into the street.

Presently Guy came out and was shadowed away. Jack did not lose sight of him until he saw him enter a strange house with a key which he took from a pocket.

There was no following him now, for the door was locked behind the rogue.

Pretty soon Gotham Guy came out of the building with more speed than he had entered with, and it was hard work for the young reporter to keep up with him.

"Something unexpected has happened," muttered Jack. "The rascal is out of sorts and nervous."

He was right. The unexpected had taken place.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE VICTIMLESS TRAP.

GO HAM GUY had entered the house in which Rook, the merciless man of the beetles had worked the wall game against Dodger Dick.

He wanted to see for himself whether his friend and tool had effectually silenced the troublesome boy.

The interior of the house was not unknown to Guy, and he knew where to find the room with the deadfall.

Without loss of time, he proceeded to it and unlocked the door, but could not open it for an obstacle which was the fallen wall itself.

Beyond the wall, as the city sharp could see, all was dark and still.

"I don't think the wall is down to the floor!" suddenly exclaimed Guy, who could thrust his arm inside. "If the boy is under it he is safe enough, but I want to know."

He left the door without relocking it, and found his way to the apartment where Rook had worked the machinery of the trap.

Gotham Guy took hold of the windlass that payed out the ropes running through the wall, and worked it until he knew that the false wall had resumed its perpendicular position when he drew back and went away.

In a little while he was at the door in the hall again.

As the wall was up he could open the door with ease, which he did, and stepped into the trap.

The following moment he struck a match and lit the gas alongside the wall. Then he cast his eyes about the room.

All at once an exclamation of horror welled from Guy's throat. He was the only occupant of the room!

"In Satan's name, where is the boy?" cried Guy. "The wall was not clear down when I found it; but then, it was low enough to crush him. He is not here. Did he fool Rook? While the beetle-maker was working the trap, was he getting out like a rat?"

Guy did not stop to speculate. His discovery excited him beyond all efforts at self-control, and turning off the gas, he left the house with the speed noticed by Jack Jilson, the young reporter, on guard outside.

He did not go back to the place where he had left Rook, for he knew he would not find Rook there, therefore, he turned toward Tenth street, into which he ran after a short journey.

He approached Mrs. Matson's house with considerable caution, for his run had given him a chance to cool down, and his eyes were on the lookout for his spy.

Everything was quiet about the premises, and it took Guy some time to discover the man he had put on guard.

At last he saw a dark figure in a doorway near Lucy's hiding-place, and a minute later he had made himself known.

In low whispers the city sharp communicated his startling discovery, and despite the shadows that hemmed them in, he thought he saw Rook's eyes flash with madness.

"We must try again," said the beetle maker quietly. "The rat has become an eel."

"Try again?" echoed Guy. "How often have we failed to hold the imp! You are losing your grip. Your beetles and your traps are worthless."

"My beetles kill and my traps hold!" was the quick retort spoken in tones which could not be misunderstood. "The rat was under the wall when it came down. If, as you say, it was not on the floor, that is the fault of the machinery. Don't throw any upbraiding in Rook's teeth. What did you find at Mother Sturgeon's?"

"Nothing."

"I told you so!" replied the beetle-maker. "The boy was not foolish enough to leave the bug where he knew it was apt to be hunted. We seem to be even, ha, ha! You did not find the insect and the wall missed the boy!"

Gotham Guy bit his lip till it bled, and an angry retort came to his tongue's end, but he held it back.

"We must find the boy first," he spoke. "He will play his biggest card now."

"He is a fool if he doesn't," said Rook. "I think I would."

"What do you think he will do?"

"There is no telling."

"Will he call the police to his aid?"

"Probably."

Guy did not reply for a little while.

"What have you seen since you mounted guard here?" he asked abruptly.

"Nothing," smiled Rook. "There is nothing to guard here."

"Why not?"

"The house yonder is empty."

Gotham Guy let out a cry he could not keep back.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed, but the twinkle in Rook's eyes grew more apparent.

"You can go in and see," said he, waving his dark hand toward Mrs. Matson's domicile. "I have been obeying orders, that's all. I was sent here to watch the house, not to leave my post because it was empty."

"How did you discover all this?"

"I've been through the place."

Guy seemed to take a long breath.

Had Lucy Marigold escaped him again?

He looked at Rook and got a very sarcastic and unsatisfactory look in return.

"Come! we don't want to watch empty nests!" he exclaimed. "We want to run the boy down as soon as possible. After him we will find your beetle—"

"I'd sooner have the bug than the boy," interrupted Rook.

"Hang your bugs!" was the answer. "They'll get your neck into the noose before you're done with them."

Rook wheeled upon Guy and gave him a glance which appeared to pierce him through.

"Well, it is my neck!" he hissed. "Look out for your own if Dodger Dick isn't found before morning."

On a certain corner some distance from Mrs. Matson's the two men separated, and Rook went to the trap of the false wall.

It did not take him long to discover that the Dodger had effected his escape, and when he had done so, he left the house, going straight to the one that contained his work-shop and his beetles.

"Gotham Guy can't afford to talk back to me," came in low, keen tones from the beetle-maker's lips as he turned on the gas. "I know too much, and I have the upper hand."

Scarcely had Rook finished ere he started back, his eyes filled with amazement and his cheeks almost pale.

A door at one end of the room had opened, and Dodger Dick was covering him with his finger for two stalwart men who held cocked revolvers in their hands.

The police!

CHAPTER XX.

"THAT IS THE MAN."

THE failure of the false wall to crush the boy detective of New York, must not be charged to any sympathy that Rook ought to have had for him.

The simple truth is, that the terrible shroud had, for once, caught on its way down, and that it had stopped before grinding the life out of the victim lying unconscious beneath it.

Dick had no means of escape until Gotham Guy left the door unlocked while he went to lift the wall again, when he seized the opportunity thus afforded, and got out of the house before he was discovered.

"I will work fast now!" was his first exclamation. "There are to be no more traps for me. If there must be deadfalls, let them catch the gallows game that wait for them."

Dick resolved to secure Rook first, as he, with his cunning, had come to be the most dreaded of his enemies, and then he wanted to gather in the man and his beetles at one cast.

He hurried with a brace of police to Rook's house; but the beetle fiend was not found.

"He won't be gone long," said Dick. "We will wait in the web a while; maybe the spider will come back."

Further events proved that the boy was not mistaken, for we have just seen that Rook, the cruel and cunning, walked as neatly into a trap as ever a quarry had done.

He said not a word when he was taken in by the officers, but gave the boy sleuth a look which was not likely to be forgotten in a hurry.

For all that, Dick noticed a strange gleam in the man's eyes, but when he saw him safely lodged in the station, he believed that the law would deal as it should with Rook, the man with the beetles.

"Here! which way?" cried a voice on the streets as Dick came out of the station with two policemen at his heels, and the boy looked into the face of Jack Jilson.

"Why, is it you, Jack?" he exclaimed in return. "I find you just in time to help me to my second victory."

"What is your first one?"

"I have caged the trap-springer."

"Rook?"

"Rook himself."

"Who comes next?"

"Ah! who but Gotham Guy?"

"Where do you expect to find him?"

"We were going to try his old lodgings."

Jack, the young reporter, laughed.

"You will find them empty, Dick," said he. "I have been on the fellow's trail for the last hour."

"You, Jack? An hour ago I was under the wall of horrors! But, have you run Guy of Gotham down?"

"I think I have."

Guided by Jack Jilson, Dick and his police friends made a long journey under the lamps and through the shadows of New York.

At last he stopped and pointed toward a house, at sight of which the wharf spy-detective gave vent to a cry of astonishment.

"This is the house of the false wall!" he exclaimed.

"I know nothing about that," smiled Jack. "My word for it, my man is in there."

Dodger Dick could not imagine what would take Gotham Guy back to the house, but it was no time for speculation.

As the little party were in the midst of a subdued consultation, the front door opened, and a man came out.

In an instant the police stepped forward.

"That is the man!" exclaimed the Dodger, throwing up his hand and covering the startled person, and in a moment Guy was in the toils.

"Some other time, my ferret with ten lives!" he hissed, coming toward Dick with his hands clinched, and the boy with a laugh responded:

"The 'other time,' Master Guy, will never come!"

Gotham Guy was taken to join Rook at the police station, and Jack Jilson went to his lodgings to write up the best sensation he had corraled in a long time.

The next morning a dead man was found in a station house cell, and when Dodger Dick turned the collar down he showed to a group of astonished spectators, a singular crescent-shaped mark on the throat.

"Look!" he cried. "Rook made the beetle kill its master in the end!"

At night, in the silence of his cell and with no one to stay his hand, the strange man of mystery had applied one of his own deadly insects to his throat and coolly taken his own life.

Among his effects the detectives found enough evidence to clear up the mystery which had hung so long over the death of Lucy's father, Rufus Marigold, and there remained no doubt that he had died by the beetle, though the proof was not direct enough to show that Rook had manipulated it.

Gotham Guy was promptly tried for conspiracy against the happiness and fortune of Lucy Marigold, who was found back in Mrs. Martin's house on O— street, and the prison doors that opened for him shut him from the world to-day.

Broadway Bink was tried for the death of Nero Noggles, and got a term that will keep him behind stone walls the balance of his life.

It was dog kill dog, and the jury taking such a view of the case, refused to hang him.

Lucy got her right possessions without much trouble, and lawyer Moneyfist never had the pleasure of touching a dollar of her fortune.

The friendship that grew up between the girl and Jack, the reporter, ripened, in time, into something stronger still, and a few months since the heiress of the Marigolds became the young pencil-pusher's bride.

Mother Sturgeon recovered from her injuries and Dick escorted her joyfully from the hospital, but not back to the big house with many rooms which had been their abode so long.

Instead, he installed her in an elegant home furnished and deeded to her by Lucy, and there the old lady, with faithful Dick, the boss boy of Gotham, passes her days in peace.

Not all Lucy's wealth could wean the Dodger from his chosen profession of sleuth, and, though he no longer frequents the piers so much, he is still almost constantly on the scent, with two keen eyes on the alert for strange traps and pitfalls.

We may meet the brave young fox of New York again.

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